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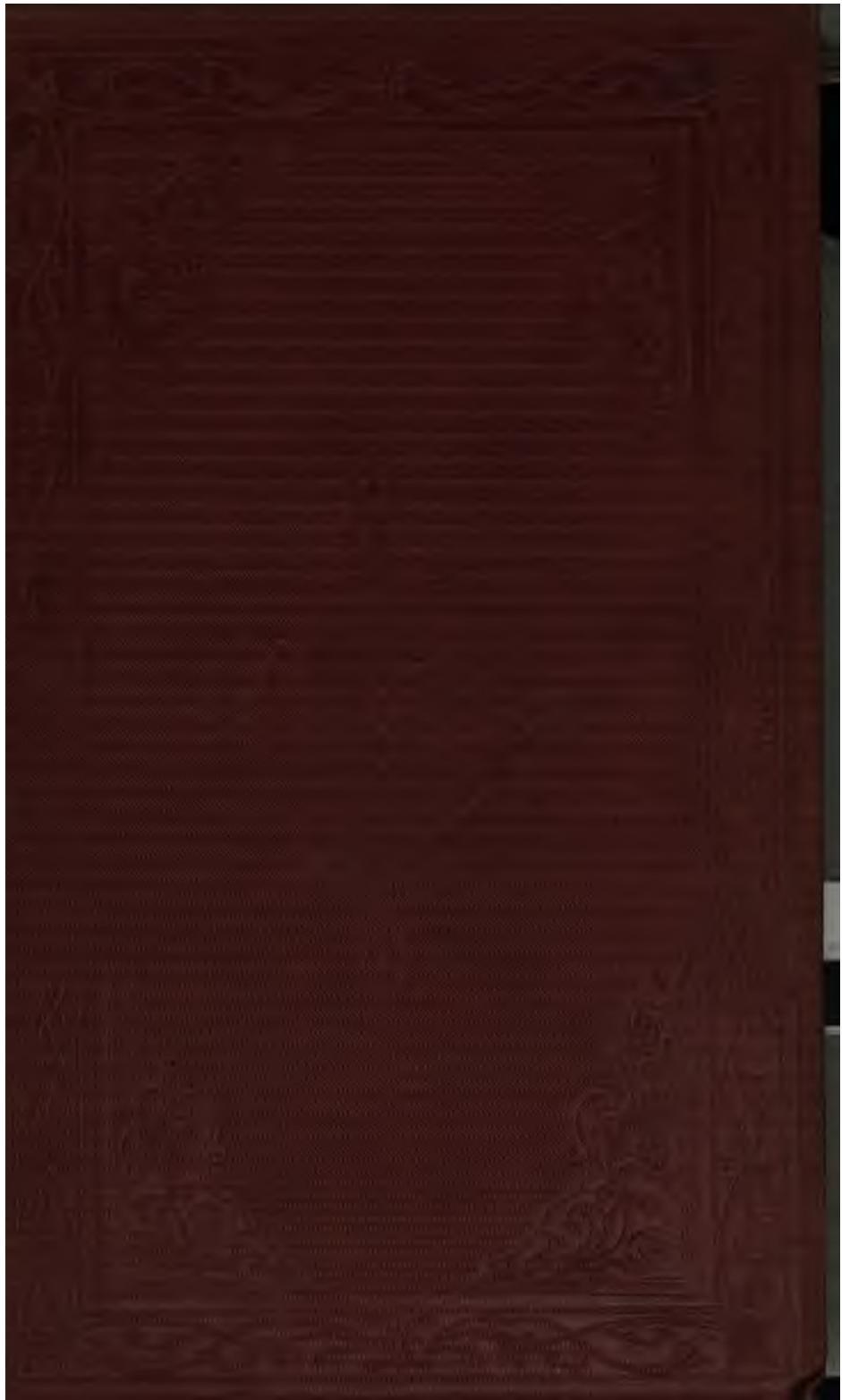
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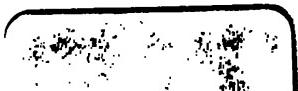
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LADY AVICE.

—
VOL. I.



L A D Y A V I C E.

A STORY OF THE DAY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1851.

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TO EMILY,

ACCORDING to an old promise, and in all gratitude for the loving interest taken in this Work by her, and for all the pleasant and congenial companionship which I daily enjoy in her society, do I dedicate my book ; and I feel sure to her it will not be the less welcome, that I join with hers the name of one who is to us both, to us all, as “The Light of our Dwelling.”

SEPTEMBER, 1851.



P R E F A C E .

I HAVE determined to give the world some of my thoughts, some facts and incidents that either have, or might have fallen under my own observation.

I do not suppose I shall succeed as well as many others.

The only person who has read my book is prejudiced in its favour by her affection for the writer.

I believe "Mir Scheint" will not be a striking story.

I know one point on which it will be attacked. And that is, Why did not Lady Avice prefer Hervie Ashill to Ethelred ?

My readers, such things happen every day. Those we would *match* choose most unaccountable objects for their affections. However, if I am patiently received this time, perhaps I shall try again. This time it is not a regular novel. It is simply pictures of life, thrown into a story according to my own impressions of the destinies I see around me on all sides—of the griefs that are borne silently—and of the remedy that might cure all, if applied.

Farewell, dear readers ; take me and see how you like me. Some of you are my dear friends, and those I think will like my book, without, perhaps, recognizing whose it is,—of all compliments the most flattering. In a foreign land, I hope to be amused and pleased by hearing that “Mir Scheint” has excited a little curiosity among my friends in England. Is this vanity ? It is, indeed, Mir Scheint.

SEPTEMBER, 1851.

LADY AVICE.

CHAPTER I.

Mir scheint es ist eine wundersame Welt. Mir scheint wir gleichen keinen anderen Engeln, keinen anderen Thieren, doch haben wir etwas von jeder dieser zwei Natiiren.

Mir scheint das Leben ist sehr traurig wenn man nicht jeden Tag, Gott und seiner Brüder tiefer und treuer zu lieben und dienen, lernt.

Mir scheint daß ich erzählen könnte, wie eine Tochter der Erde so gelernt und so gehan hat. Horchen Sie mir mein Freunde ?

It was certainly a human voice, but by no means a pleasant one, that sounded in the drowsy ears of a certain individual at an uncertain hour

on the morning of the 1st of July, reminding him that it was necessary to rise from his recumbent position (for want of a better) upon the rug, and breakfast before leaving Stroud—Stroud, that lovely place, was rosy with flowers and sunbeams, and conveniently near to a railway ; but no railway suited the capricious will of our travellers, and no natural beauties could induce them to retard their progress. Your pardon, reader, I intend to trouble you no more with railways, being convinced that to you, as to myself, the subject of that monster-convenience must be dull and oft-repeated indeed. Our friends were, however, all the longer on their road for neglecting it ; but we must describe them briefly at their breakfast at Stroud, and then leave them to find their way to Henley as best they may. We shall find them there two days after their departure from Stroud.

Hervie Ashill, the individual who was disturbed from his spaniel-like position of repose, was an odd fellow, as people said ; one who never did as others

do, though that is neither decisively a good or evil report of any one; and he was going back to London, after having left it suddenly a week before, in a fit of despair—no one knew at *what*, but at some event. His wanderings had brought him to the beautiful place of a friend of his, Colonel Macbrae, who being the younger son of a very old Scotch family, had saved, with difficulty, a small sum of money upon which to marry; when, by saving the life of a boy who was just entering the service, he attached to himself the whole family, and so especially one maiden lady thereof, who, being fifty, and an heiress, had devoted all her affections to this boy, her cousin's only child, that she insisted upon his coming to stay at Glenferns, became really attached to the *noble Colonel*, as she always called him, and at length began to droop and pine, lose flesh, and strength and energy, and was obliged to consult her physician, who assured her that it was all upon the nerves, and told her cousin, in confidence, that were she twenty instead of fifty, he should suspect “une

belle passion." Her cousin of course laughed at such an idea; but nevertheless he told Colonel Macbrae of it. Was not this a shocking indiscretion?

Indeed, I think so, and so did Mr. Nugent, when he saw that it had not exactly the effect he had expected, and that Macbrae looked grave, and confused, or at least annoyed.

Poor Macbrae! he had resolved to marry, but he had had sweet visions of a young and gentle woman—a very woman to cheer and adorn his home. Now Hortensia Nugent was not ungentle, perhaps, but she was not young, nor quite according to his idea of a very woman. Ah! why are we all supposed to lose this fairest attribute, at the age when our complexion becomes hard or faded?

Hortensia's, however, *was* wonderfully preserved; the softness of her colour yet remained, the white of her skin was flesh-white, neither the yellow hue of advancing age, nor the blue tint of advancing disease. Would you know, fair girls, how this was preserved? No veal-

cutlets, Sir—nor even rose-lotions at night. She had a good skin in her youth ; she lived temperately, took her pills in sal-volatile, and dressed every evening. But this is a digression, and though poor Macbrae's thoughts digressed too, it was by a different path. *He* thought of her *mind* : she was intelligent and well-informed, but in the *corners* of her mind there was room for prejudice. The bee of industry has not such, for she fits her cell, and a really cosmopolite soul has enlarged her tent, and made its perfect circle embrace all the earth, and look with unimpeded view upon the blue vault that taught our ancestors the noblest form in architecture, according to a very pleasant modern author ;* but there *are* minds in which the globe of knowledge is wedged in, like a ball in a tight box, is compressed itself, and fails to fill the corners. Oh, those corners ! why do we leave them unswept ?

Macbrae, however, was sufficiently struck with

* *Footsteps of the Normans, or Rollo and his Race.*

the hint given by his friend, to colour and look foolish whenever Hortensia's languid eyes met his ; and she, seeing this, conceived that he was really smitten with her—a thought that was balm to her heart, though, to do her justice, it had never occurred to her that *she* was in love. The very next day he left Glenferns for three nights, and she became so ill that her cousin was alarmed, and sent for further advice.

In the meantime, Hortensia lay upon her sofa in solitude, and thought—thought of all the events of the last week—thought of Macbrae—of her illness ; then with a suppressed scream, arrived at the idea : “ *What ! do I love ! I, at my age—love, that never visited my heart in youth ! is it come now ! oh, shame, shame ! Poor Frankie, too, have I brought him up for this, to disappoint him at last ?* ”

Long did she turn over in her mind fragments of meditation on this subject, and at length began to assure herself that it was undoubtedly *possible* for Macbrae to love her.

Oh, vanity of womankind ! yes, she, the lady of fifty, whose hopes of happiness had long been centred upon the next generation, blushed as she admitted to herself that perhaps she was not too old to be cared for. For the idea of her fortune passed away from her mind. She, who had steeled her heart in early life, with the conviction that she was only sought as a means of wealth, against every one who attempted to interest her, now, at fifty years old, was able to imagine herself loved for herself—as Hortensia Nugent—apart from rent-roll, funds and shares—loved as a woman ! Can you believe it, young girls ? can you believe it, heiresses ? can *you*, mothers of little children brought up scantily in all but the priceless treasure of an overflowing love and tenderness, believe this thing ? Yes, you can and may. Can *you* who seek, believe it as readily as gentle women do ? Can you, men, believe that, after fifty years of heiress-ship and all its peculiar trials and cares, a woman's heart *might* respond to love's first call, and

never think that a serpent might lurk under its roses ?

You may believe it—for it was so, and Hortensia felt as shy of her own emotions (true test of their reality), as any rosebud girl of sixteen. But I do not intend to keep you long upon this subject, suffice it, that “the loves of the Macbraes” ended in a splendid wedding. Mr. Nugent, who was a generous being, having insisted upon its being so, in order, as he said, that no one might think *he* grudged Macbrae this good fortune or regretted “Frankie’s” lost hopes. In pursuance of this principle, he invited his cousin to cause great rejoicings for the poor, and himself engaged a choir of young girls to sing some verses to the tune of “Va Pensiero,” which sounded better than you may imagine, rising and falling on the still air, as the Macbrae drove forth from Glenferns, to spend some days at his house near Tewkesbury.

Whether it was likely that Macbrae had *quite* as bewitching a home, for the next three

years, as if he had found a bonnie lassie of twenty, who would have owed all she had to him, and have looked up to him with veneration as ten years her senior, and her guide, superior in all things, you may easily decide in your own minds. Ere long, Hortensia found his voice disagreeably loud, and his military manner offensively imperious to the servants. She, on her side, took to legislating most minutely, upon tea, coffee, butter, bread, cheese ; not so much *how* these valuable comestibles were expended—as how they were cut, divided, eaten, or not eaten, at table ; his dress too escaped not her vigilance, and any laughing excuse made for not wearing or eating exactly what *she* liked best, made the matter worse. They received visitors gladly, and entertained them well ; but children who were taken there always begged not to have the treat repeated, for kind as Mrs. Macbrae was she *never left them alone* ; and children less than any people, can endure a perpetually interfering, directing manner, though it may be most benevolently designed to teach

them how to be comfortable, happy, or agreeable, as the case may be.

There was nothing, therefore, really very interesting at this time in the every-day life of Colonel Macbrae, of Glenferns, and perhaps, some readers will hold it to be an entirely useless episode—this retrospective view of his marriage—others may think it incredible; but as “*Mir Scheint*” means only to suggest facts and possibilities, as they appear to me, I am not bound, my dear reader, to foresee in you, a less willing belief in human nature, woman’s nature, than I myself entertain; and I therefore say that, to me at least, Hortensia’s passion was real, her forgetfulness of her fortune real too, and her subsequent determination, real again, “*Mir Scheint*.”

Colonel Macbrae was not very unwilling to accompany Jack to London, the young man who was his friend, and who had arrived unexpectedly at Glenferns; spent two nights there, and was now returning, by Macbrae’s counsel, to London.

On their way, he had, in vain, attempted again and again, to penetrate or dissipate the dense cloud that seemed to have settled upon his companion's spirits ; but the cause lay too deep for his probing, and the ill was too sore for his pharmacy.

Macbrae was not skilled in that, which is beautifully said to be—

“ The truest wisdom here, and noblest act,
Is his who skills of *comfort* best.”

Near Henley they were joined by another traveller, known to Macbrae as a large land-owner, and active busy character, well versed in news (and new in verse, may be, but that importeth not to my history). This individual, mounted, like our friends, upon a steady horse (his, however, was his own, born and bred upon his land—theirs were what he contemptuously called “ horse-dealer's brutes”), after eyeing them over carefully, burst into conversation.

“ So she was married by chloroform after all.”

"Married by chloroform! who, what do you mean?" said Macbrae.

"Exactly what I say: she was married yesterday under the influence of chloroform."

"What extraordinary tales you do pick up!" said Macbrae, a little viciously, for he was hot and tired. "I remember you of old!"

"And I remember you," said the other, in a tranquil voice, that called the colour into Macbrae's face.

No, my dear friends, *not* with conscious shame. Macbrae had no cause for shame, till he married a fortune; the early days referred to, were days of which he had no cause to be ashamed; but who is so lord of "the eloquent blood" that it shall not speak unadvisedly at times and seem to respond, to an attack purely unjustifiable, as though it had touched home?

"I am not ashamed of having been poor," said he, "nor anxious to resent your recollecting my 'small beginnings,' Sir Colin. But go on with your story. *Who* was married by chloroform?"

“The beauty of our neighbourhood, and one of the prettiest girls that came out in London in this blessed year of jubilee—little Roma Somers!”

Ashill turned pale, and muttered, “*little Roma Somers!*”

The other did not hear him, but went on ; “She was, as you heard perhaps, ill, and nervous, and so forth, ever after Voltigeur won the Derby.”

By heavens !” muttered Ashill again.

“What *do* you mean ?” said Macbrae aloud. “What had Voltigeur to do with Miss Somers ?”

“Well, perhaps it was not the Derby ; there was a wedding—marriage announced the day before—not *hers*, but *his* ; and he betted against Voltigeur and lost six thousand—that is all.”

“*Whose* wedding ?” almost screamed both hearers.

“Ethelred Kent’s,” was the reply ; but before it was finished Sir Colin’s horse plunged

violently, reared, swerved, and darted off, roaring as if in pain : it well might—Ashill had given it *such* a cut instead of its master, as he vociferated, “Now by heaven!” that its hide was bleeding. Macbrae looked quietly after the flying horseman, and observed, “There is a hill presently, that will stop him ;” while Ashill, sobered by this outbreak, would have galloped after him, but Macbrae laid his hand upon his rein, and said, “He will be safer alone.”

They soon lost sight of him ; and Ashill, dismounting, laid his head upon the ground, to hear the hoof-tread, and exclaimed :

“ You are right ; he is quieter now ; he is come to the hill.”

Then rising, and not noticing Macbrae’s look of surprise at him altogether, he remounted, and rode forward, silently. Ere long they arrived at a cross road.

“ Stupid fellow,” cried Macbrae ; “he has passed the turning to N——, and we are to get a feed there for the horses. Will you ride on, Ashill, and order luncheon for us, and corn for

our creatures ? and I will go and look after Sir Colin."

Ashill did as he was requested ; and, as he went, pondered upon how far Macbrae had seen the cause of Sir Colin Rysstay's sudden rage ; or still more to be dreaded, that he detected the cause of poor Ashill's own rage ?

" Oh ! that I could lay it in Lethe, and lose all sense of it ! This bitter, burning temper, that is so terribly in my way ! Oh Thou, who alone canst take this burden from me, I ask not for riches, for success, for even the blessing of being—loved ; but for *this*, that I may attain self-government."

As he spoke these words in the depth of his heart, in the fervour of his incomplete devotion, his countenance assumed a more hopeful expression. He was passing a garden, and a little meadow ; in the latter, two persons were walking. A child of about ten years old, fair and slight, and in mourning, was talking in an eager voice.

" Do look !" she said ; " there is a crimson

rose, a white jessamine, and a blue achæmenes ; are they not pretty together ? Look ! I will put the wreath of blue-bells on my doll ; is not she gay now ? Ah ! ” said she, sorrowfully, “ you are tired ; I will go away now ; good-bye ; kiss me.”

The person addressed turned towards her, and bent over her fondly.

“ I will go in too presently, dear Zina,” said she ; “ go and order tea ; you shall make it for me to-night.”

The child ran in, delighted.

The lady walked on pensively a few steps, then paused, and raised her eyes. They were full of thought—sad thought—long sweet eyes of intense beauty. Her hair of the very fairest, so fair as to resemble that of a child ; too light it would have been for any face less radiantly fair than was hers. But she was like a being of light, as if a few rays of glory had assumed a thin veil of mortality, and selected the most delicate features, and withal majestic in their very delicacy, as their shrine. To a common

mind even, she would have seemed like a white antelope; to a child, like an angel; to Ashill, she seemed the very personification of Eve in the Garden—like the first lovely female form that followed the command: “ Let there be light ; and there was light.”

“ I too have seen many beautiful faces,” thought he; “ I have seen the personifications of every grace, of every virtue; but my ideal of primeval purity, my dream of woman filling the place of Dante’s star-angels, directing heavenly light down upon the earth in a full radiant flood has never before been realized. ‘ O, thou sweet wonder !’ might one well address her. And is it possible that sorrow has been allowed to touch that lovely creation ? Yes, her deep mourning, and the ring on that transparent finger, besides the sweet, subdued look of those sapphire eyes, tell me that here even hath entered sad experience of life, and life’s woes.”

She was now near him, as may be perceived by his observations, but could not possibly see

him ; and as he had involuntarily pulled up his horse, no sound aroused her attention, as she slowly paced homewards. She, with a graceful step, and head bent down (such a lovely head ! but he could hardly see its outline in her bonnet) went on into her garden. He could not move, till she was gone into her house ; and then he cantered on, half-angry with himself, for being so attracted, and at the same time pleased that Macbrae had not been beside him. He could hardly have hoped Macbrae would have been so quiet as he himself had been ; and to have had her disturbed !—he had rather have been shot. Does this seem to any one who reads it over-drawn ? It is evident that “little Roma Somers” was not indifferent to Ashill’s heart, that he could not calmly hear her spoken of lightly ; and yet—no, my fair reader, be not deceived, you have not detected poor Ashill in inconsistency this time.

He admired the lovely vision in the garden, without her image in the least overshadowing

that of Roma, whom he did indeed love passionately once, and whose recollection was still too precious, notwithstanding the steady effort he had determined to make to subdue it, of which effort the return to London was the first great action. As he rode slowly forward, his thoughts went over the whole history of their acquaintance, which I need not here detail; he recalled the first sweet evening in London, when he had met her at a dinner-party. How she had told him, that his words were not like ordinary conversation on another occasion. How she had paid the pretty compliment, of recollecting what he said on the rare occasions of their meeting, and by artless allusions showing that she did so; and how he had been unnerved, by hearing, first the rumour, then the certainty, of her engagement to Lord Alfred Beauly.

Engrossed in these sad reminiscences, Hervie Ashill entered the little town of N——, and checked his horse mechanically before the door of the inn. The hostess stood patiently waiting

for orders full three minutes, while Hervie Ashill and his horse remained before her, like figures cut in stone. At last, the laughter of the ostlers aroused Ashill, and he heard the twentieth repetition of the quiet question :

“ Won’t you please to alight, Sir ? ”

In one rapid movement, he then left his horse, ordered refreshment for himself and friends, and returned to accompany his steed, and see it fed.

. There was some little difficulty as to accommodation, and ere this was arranged, Colonel Maesbrae arrived, and began explaining the length of his absence, (which, sooth to say, his friend had certainly not felt, though it was in fact two hours since they had parted,) and added, that he had “ found Sir Colin a good deal annoyed, and heated by his horse’s unusual gambols, as he called them, and not very willing to go any further ; he had, therefore, let him go his way.”

“ Then he was not thrown ? ” rejoined Ashill.

"Oh, no," replied Macbrae, "only a little bruised and shaken."

Ashill expected a challenge every moment, but it came not. Evidently Macbrae was the bearer of no hostile message, for they were both engaged to dine with Sir Colin at his house in Curzon Street, at no distant day, and also to accompany him into Oxfordshire before the end of the season..

In fact, if Ashill's gesture had been detected by Sir Colin, he did not intend to expose his own life—his comfortable, easy life—by resenting the insult ; if Macbrae had observed it, he had no inclination to foment a difference, or to play the part of second in a duel. "There is a fashion in all things," thought Hervie with a bitter smile, "and duels are not the fashion this year."

They conversed together, or rather Macbrae talked, and Hervie listened *not*, until the former fell asleep, having taken possession as usual of the one good chair, and left his friend a seat that courted not repose. Ashill strolled

out, until it was time to pursue their way, by tranquil evening's light, some miles further.

They were to dine the following day at a very pleasant house some miles out of town, and on the river. Having met the boy-servant of Macbrae, who had charge of their luggage, at the appointed place, they dressed and stepped into the fly that was to carry them to Lady Sylverton's. Here assembled, they found a somewhat large party of visitors in the house; perhaps the most remarkable, externally, were a very beautiful girl of nineteen, niece to Lady Sylverton, and a young man of about twenty-five, who, having "sculled" up the river to Henley, and found, as he had reckoned upon doing, abundant hospitality, had also found what he might have, but had not, also foreseen, that the heat of the sun is great upon the river, that it affects human skin, and produces sun-burn, tan, and blisters; also that he could not handle a knife and fork, for the pain of his fingers, raw with rowing. He was naturally exceedingly agreeable, however, and

never at a loss for conversation ; he was an estimable *parti* also, and the aunt of the beautiful Agnes Sylverton had no objection to the looks of compassion she cast upon this " Ancient Mariner," for the perils he had past.

Many very distinguished people were there collected ; amongst others, the great and renowned Colonel R——, whose skill in military science would have made him a hero, had not his erudition made him an oracle. Languages were all open to him, and he used this facility, that nature gave him, to fathom the treasures to which it was the master-key, not to display as a vain proof of skill or peculiar organization. The gentle and learned Sir D. B—— was also of that goodly company ; and the ingenious author of the ninth Bridgewater Treatise ; and the great botanist, whose modest countenance and manner were well contrasted with some others there, whose bold bearing was the herald to no such treasure as *his* mind contained. Hervie Ashill knew, more or less, most of the company. Sir de Vere Sylverton was a very

deeply-read man, a great invalid ; his wife, a very active and excellent woman, who, not being herself equal to him in mind, had the sense and kindness to make her invitations chiefly include those who were fit to entertain *him*. Society she adored, but not selfishly, she imagined it essential to his happiness. I do not think it was so, by any means, for a new Treatise on the Tertiary Formation would, at any time satisfy him ; but, if she thought so, if she devoted herself to society for his sake, and selected not her own, but his friends and chosen companions, she was very hardly judged by those who called her a woman given to dissipation, extravagant, worldly, and thoughtless ; at least so I humbly think—“ *Mir scheint so !*”

CHAPTER II.

“Alas ! how is’t with you
That you do bend your eyes on vacancy,
And with th’ incorporal air do hold discourse.”

HAMLET.

“She was a spirit excellent in discourse,
And well-adorned with knowledge.
But in the house of mourning she was
A very angel—hand, lip, and eye gave forth
The tenderest consolation and firm aid.”

WHEN seated at dinner, Ashill found himself next to a person, whose presence he had not previously noticed, but whom he had long known slightly—Lady Avice Atheling. Avice Atheling was about four and twenty, not

regularly beautiful, though perfectly free from anything ordinary or common-place, and remarkable only for her quiet elegance. Ashill had never seen her moved or excited; but then, he only knew her in the daily ride in Rotten Row, at parties, &c., and not by any means, I will not say intimately, but conversationally even. The discourse of the many couples was arrested by somebody's mentioning a great public calamity—the loss of a mighty leader in politics; and when Ashill mentioned that he had that very day met one of the family, the question was put to him by a somewhat forward person:

“Did you add your testimony of praise and regret, to those they must be hearing on all sides?”

“No,” replied Ashill, gravely, “he knew, by my speech, that I was an Englishman; and by my appearance, he saw that I was a sane man; and I needed not to express to him what every man, and every Englishman is feeling with, and for him.”

“ Bravo,” cried several of the best, wisest, voices there.

Lady Avice’s eyes flashed with pleasure; Ashill was struck by their expression, and, in a low voice, said :

“ I believe, Lady Avice understands me !”

“ Indeed I do,” replied she, “ and I am so delighted to hear any one say what you said just now.”

“ In reference to this loss in particular, or to people in distress, generally ?” asked Hervie.

“ Both,” she said ; “ I have a horror myself of touching upon the inner feelings of any one, by either praising or lamenting their most precious things.”

“ Why so ?” asked Ashill in a tone of interest.

“ Because I feel how far my conception of the good they possess, or the good they lament, must fall short of their appreciation of it. I feel like a fool rushing in—you know the line ?”

“ Yes ; but you have spoilt it,” cried Ashill.

“ And fools rush in—where angels fear to tread.”

“ Thank you,” said Avice, “ I had spoilt it.”

"If," continued Ashill, "you feel this so strongly, are you not afraid of meeting with people who are unhappy?"

"No! not in the least. They interest me beyond all others; and I am glad to be thrown in their way."

"How does this agree with your notion of touching upon their sorrows?"

"Perfectly," replied Lady Avice; "for the very feeling that I have expressed invests them with a dignity that makes them sacred in my eyes."

"But you can never speak to them."

"Oh, yes! People soon see if you care, or think about them; there is an instinct in grief, not to lay itself open where it will not be understood, and to own its pain where it is sure of sympathy. I do not dread this, quite the reverse; only I could not press upon any one, in trouble, my conception of the thing they have lost."

Hervie was silent, for Lady Avice's other neighbour was inquiring of her who was the

Colonel R—— who sat near their host. Avice gave a clear and correct account of his labours and successes ; and he then asked her several other questions, about the people present, all of which she answered in a gentle voice and epigrammatic style, equally uncommon, and entertaining. While thus engaged, a servant, leaning over her chair to place a flank dish, twisted his foot in the chair and slipped ; he recovered himself, but not before the sauce had scalded Avice's hand, and her chair had been tilted by his weight, so that when he stood erect, and the dish flat, she was fairly under the table—a circumstance very annoying to her hostess and herself, painful to the poor servant, and very full of temptations to laugh to every one else.

Macbrae, and one or two others, not famed for self-control, laughed inextinguishably ; and, as Avice was by no means disposed to take offence, or to make much of her accident, but quickly rose, and sat with her scalded hand in her handkerchief, they supposed that there

was no great harm done. A magnificent pair of trained plants, a thurnbergia of the purest white, and an achæmenes of the deepest blue, (the latter quite a novelty as a trained plant), stood upon the table, and rather concealed the risibility faction opposite.

Ashill felt exceedingly indignant ; and Avice only gave a new direction to his thoughts, by requesting him to look for a letter ; she said she had dropped it in her hurry to rise :

“ It was given to me as we came here,” said she, “ and I have not yet opened it.” He was going to search immediately. “ No,” said she, “ when we go into the drawing-room, it will do quite well.”

“ How would your correspondent like such coolness about it,” asked Ashill a little harshly.

He had the bad habit of being rough when not touched. As he spoke, his foot touched the little missive, and he immediately stooped and gave it to her. She was just answering his question, when his eye fell upon the seal, “ Roma,” in old English, stood out in clear

characters, and he almost lost Avice's reply, which was indeed given in most gentle tones.

"Roma will not mind it." He heard only the first word, and a mist was before his eyes; a faintness came over him, that obliged him to sink back in his chair. Avice comprehended, in an instant, and sat back also, as if in deep conversation, though too full of sympathetic pain for him to be able to speak for an instant; but her tact suggested the movement, and with an effort she carried her obedience to its instinct a little further, and in a low tone went on speaking: "I received it just as I came out; it is a tantalizing time for the post to come in; imagine, last night I was obliged to dine out and sleep, and in consequence, I knew nothing of my correspondent's civilities until this morning, and one was a very interesting communication from the Duke of Siluria, Sir Roderick Murchison, very unlike the 'Last of the Goths.' However, he has given my sister a curious Cuba dog, and we have called it 'Rusilia;' perhaps had it been a hound, 'Theron' would have been more appro-

priate ; but at all events, it is a great beauty, and a great pet also. Do you believe the story of the Dean of Limerick's dog ? The one Mr. Jesse tells of, the dog dropping the smaller hat into the larger, in order to carry it, happened to a person I know well, and he told Mr. Jesse the story. Have you ever met Mr. Jesse ? He is very agreeable, but there is none I like so much as Mr. B——, that great naturalist opposite to us ; look at him, so gentle and unassuming, and yet such an authority in all such matters, a true picture of zeal and great excellence."

" Yes, indeed he is," replied Hervie, now recovering himself ; " thank you very much."

" What are you thanking Lady Avice for ?" said his neighbour.

" For showing a great man to him," replied Avice smiling. " I think it wrong not to make every one, who is unconsciously enjoying such an occasion, aware of the precious opportunity they are losing ; one is so glad to have seen and heard great men."

" Hero-worship !—hero-worship !" replied Mr

M—— laughing ; “ tell me, do they generally come up to your preconceived ideas, Lady Avice ?”

“ Yes,” she replied, “ very often they far surpass it, not by beauty, but by intellectual expression. I think one quite knows a great man, by his eye, and by his hand.”

“ By his hand ?”

“ Why not ? as well as by hair, or handwriting ? I am sure portraits of hands are quite as characteristic as portraits of faces ; and if I could be supplied with them, I could tell the character to admiration.”

Mr. M—— glanced at hers : she at that of the author near them, whose hand is most characteristic of his powerful mind, and equally so of his strong individuality. He who never does, or says, anything like other people, whose genius can put any construction, or semblance it pleases upon any subject ; who has written so ably upon the scenes of future awards and penalties, and yet who too often uses his talents to confuse and dazzle, rather

than to enlighten, those whom he honours with his conversation ; when he condescends to explain or instruct, who does it so ably ? Many possess the stream of knowledge, and can pour it where they will, but cannot stretch the little vessels of our minds to receive the stream. They who can do this also, are indeed rare ; and such is this great genius, to whom one would pay a worthier tribute, and in a better place than in this slight work, if it were within one's power so to do.

Avice and Mr. M—— pursued their inquiry further, but without comment, round the table ; each mentally engaged in verifying this new and amusing speculation. "The bubbles being first blown," were borne on the current, or the atmosphere rather, to the further end of the table, where their hostess sat, and she being much amused, caught at the idea, and diverted herself by making Mr. M—— lay down his rules, and comment upon the hands, at that moment engaged in taking ice in succession ; a moment very trying to the red, or

ill-shaped hand, but very becoming to the symmetry or colour of a good hand; and she caused a good deal of nonsense, and fun, and blushing, &c., by taking the matter up in her very animated manner.

Meantime, Hervie, who had quite regained his composure, addressed Avice again, asking her if she was "a friend of Lady Alfred Beauly's?"

"Yes," she replied, "I have known her since she was thirteen; would you like to know how she is? I will tell you, when I have read my letter up-stairs."

"Will you, indeed," said he; "you do not know how I shall thank you."

Yes, Avice did know; but she took no notice of the emotion of his voice. Avice knew enough of suffering of this kind, to be very well aware that though he might not bear to perceive how she could read his thoughts, he would find real relief in hearing of Roma, and she therefore went on to say: "Roma has been a source of great interest to me, ever since we went to

Pau, where she was for her mother's health in 1844 ; she was very good-natured to a little sister of mine, and was herself so exquisitely lovely and bewitching a child, that no one could help loving her. She lost her mother the following winter, and Sir John Somers was then in India with his regiment. Roma came to us till he returned ; she was even more beautiful than ever, we saw her at intervals during the years that followed, and this year she came out, and I met her everywhere. She was much admired, and more liked. At the first of the C—— House concerts, she met Lord Alfred ; her father observed how much he admired her, and knowing him slightly, asked him thenceforward often to his house. You know on all their 'Tuesdays' he was there—both are wild for mineralogy. Her father lost no opportunity of manifesting his wishes, and he has gained their accomplishment," sighed she. " But a little before it was announced, Roma fainted away at the Drawing Room suddenly, and was never afterwards free from violent headaches, so

violent as to be almost unendurable ; this was said to be mental excitement, likely to continue till she was married. The day was therefore fixed ; but when it arrived, Roma was too ill to stand. A dose of chloroform relieved her, and she was dressed and went to the Church, in the vestry she suddenly exclaimed, ‘ Oh ! my head,’ and sank down, pale as marble, on the floor. Her father, alarmed, would have put off the ceremony, but old Lady Escheek, his aunt, produced the invaluable chloroform again ; and by giving her a pocket-handkerchief slightly embued with it, enabled her to go through the ceremony, though not quite conscious the whole time, or indeed any part of it, I fear.”

“ This then,” said Ashill, “ is the truth of the chloroform story which has been so much *répandu*.”

“ Yes,” replied Lady Avice, “ told to you by an eye-witness—I was close to her ; I would not have given the chloroform, but I can vouch for the simplicity of the action, as if I had.”

"And do you think her illness was caused by —?" Ashill's voice faltered—he could not go on.

Avice fixed her clear, penetrating eye, with a gentle fearlessness, upon his—

"Roma was never strong," she said, "but I do not believe it was mere fatigue, as was said at first. I think it was a strong sense of duty that overcame strength;—she would have shrunk from many of the gay scenes she went through, but for her father's wish, to whom she was devoted."

The double meaning of this speech was not lost upon Hervie; but the ladies were withdrawing, and Avice could not wait to hear his reply.

In the drawing-room, Lady Avice retreated to a quiet corner, and read poor Roma's short note :

"She was not well," she said, "but Alfred was so kind—he was going to take her yachting next week; that would do her good, and

restore her strength, perhaps, for I am very weak, dear Avice," she concluded, "but always your loving,

" ROMA."

" Middlevale, Oxford,
" July 7th."

There was a quiet despondency in the tone of this letter that shocked Avice ; tears started to her eyes, all unused to weeping, as she pictured to herself Roma, the delicate Roma, lifting her melancholy black eyes to a face devoted to hers, but not THE ONE she dreamed of in her early dreams—watched over tenderly, but not with the skill and tact of one who knows heart, mind, and temperament well, and has the keynote to which the whole strain is set : an object of adoration, but unable to repay that adoration with one cordial leap of the heart, one thrill of joy at the sound of the voice or step.

" Roma *could have felt* all this," thought Avice. " She will never now enjoy the pure fountain of a light-springing affection—she

receives it, but she cannot give it; and it is indeed more blessed even in this to give."

Avice's deep brown eyes beamed with sorrowful love. She knew poor Roma's heart, and though she blamed her, and knew that she who weds without love, deserves to live without love, yet she felt for her—so young—so hurried by her father's love of governing others, and making them happy in *his* way—so deceived by her own delight in pleasing *him*, and the amusing life she had led, while Lord Alfred's attentions caused her father to make constant parties, &c., as occasions for them.

Ah! and Roma had a deeper cause than these; her father was a coward; had once insulted Lord Alfred's eldest brother; feared yet to be called out, as soon as the latter returned to England; and was willing to believe that this marriage would secure him from such peril; and Roma knew this; it was not, however, used as an incentive, but when she acknowledged that Lord Alfred pleased her, her father

explained his own, and very evident satisfaction, by confiding to her this history.

Avice was not left long to meditate; the pretty Agnes Sylverton and herself, as visitors in the house, were of course to exert themselves to amuse the rest of the company. Avice, indeed, was only just arrived, and from a short distance; but she was to sleep there, and being a great favourite with all at Sylverton Lodge, to remain a day or two. Lady Sylverton did not like to have many ladies at her dinner parties, and this evening, besides herself, Avice and Agnes, there were only Mrs. William Byngham, Mrs. Montfort, wife of Ashill's neighbour, at dinner, and Lady Noel. The first was a beauty, the second a wit, and the third a *savante*. No one was admitted without some claim to distinction; but what was Lady Avice's? She did not know—she had often wondered—but she had the great gift of listening well; and was just fond enough of learning to feel a real delight in listening to those whom, perhaps, she could hardly answer. “It requires so much

more power to answer than to speak well ;”—as I heard a very intelligent young lady observe lately, and I treasured the observation, for I had so often felt the truth it contained. Lady Avice then listened well, with intelligence and a gentle earnestness of expression, that showed how pleasant to her was the gaining of fresh knowledge. But where Lady Noel was, she generally drew forcibly around her the deepest learning of the party. She was a very clever woman—had travelled much, and must have written much—but had not yet stilled the flutterings of her vanity, or satisfied the cravings of her love of homage. She was not one who would listen—she thanked her fortunes there were dummies enough for that ; while she lived she must communicate ideas—when she died, she should most regret her inability to talk !

How Avice felt for her ! How would she have scorned it had she known of this pity ! She would have thought it arose from envy. Avice however admired her seriously, and never thought of envying her her talents, any more

than of coveting the rose-like beauty of Agnes, or the fortune and position of Lady Sylverton. No, Avice had a friend whom she envied more than all these—one who had passed years in various hospitals, a sufferer with several diseases, from several accidents—now at the age of thirty—old in frame, but so much the brighter in spirit—restored for a time to comparative ease of body, but knowing that her life must shortly close. Refined, and possessing a slender income—born to enjoy the world's best gifts, as so deemed by her votaries, yet now secluded from the world—living near the good, kind Avice, and bringing up a little family of three orphan cousins; Charamille Seymour, as Avice called her, was indeed happy, and to be envied ; she was living in the cheerful anticipation of death, and yet had a strong interest while life lasted. She viewed all things by the steady light of Faith, and her eyes that looked to Heaven became glorious with its calm, intense light.

Charamille loved Avice devotedly, and Avice felt that as long as that kind bosom beat, she

would never want a friend ; one, too, who was well acquainted with the difficulties and peculiarities of the life of the world that Avice led.

Sir de Vere Sylverton very quickly rejoined his fair guests — the others followed. The evening was passing away very pleasantly, when Hervie drew near to Avice, and thought he might venture to ask about the letter. She told him "that Roma was not very strong, that they were going to try sea air, and if she did not recover quickly, perhaps even the continent."

"Heaven grant I may not meet them," said Hervie to himself. "Lady Avice," he added, "do not imagine I did not feel your delicate kindness at dinner—you were a true friend—will you let me say so? I need a friend very much. Yes," said he, observing her look to Colonel Macbrae, "yes, I want one better than that; one to assist me to conquer myself—will you? I know it is not usual, on so slight an acquaintance, to ask so much; but let me hope you will say yes. You are not indeed aware

how much you seem like a clear light—able to guide and assist.”

Avice, rather surprised, but not displeased exactly, answered, “Indeed, Mr. Ashill, you do me too much honour, I do indeed feel for you,” added she in a low voice; “but I cannot think you need advice or aid.”

His impetuous reply was arrested upon his lips, by hearing the words, “Señora, V. habla Español?” close to him; and a Castilian, who was very much inclined to engross Avice, whenever they met, because she spoke French with him, was approaching very eagerly. Some one had told him that she had brought Spanish songs with her, and that she probably could speak the language (not at all a necessary inference, however).

“Si viva la Reyna muchos annos,” replied Avice, laughing. “¿Yo lo sabra V.? tenga V. la bontad de decirme como lo sabra?”

He replied, that he had long suspected her, for he had seen her laugh, and suddenly stop, as he was joking with a countryman of his some

time before. Hervie Ashill's conversation was thus completely interrupted ; but Lady Noel, who was rather glad to attach another, and a younger *savant* to her list, called him to her, and introduced him to the great Sir David B., with whom and Major R. she was discussing the article upon "Probabilities," in the "Edinburgh Review." The lady maintained, that the subject might have been made much more clear by the omission of certain phrases. In vain she was reminded of the use and force of these phrases, and of the explanations given. In vain, did each in turn endeavour to impress upon her the vast difficulty of making abstruse calculations reach obtuse perceptions ; of making those who live upon no reading, ascend to a given plane of speculation, as those whose lives are reading, can do ; and without this, the impossibility of their "starting fair." She, the good lady, had a purpose in view. She wanted to bring in her account of how she had put a philosophical statement into clearer and better English for a learned professor once, some years

ago, and of the compliments she had therefrom received, &c., which narration the gentle Sir David alone, was civil enough to hear out ; and the learned Major R., taking Ashill aside, continued the original subject, and glanced on to others from thence. The subject of Probabilities led to systems and theories ; to Humboldt, and his vast research,—and the two Schlegels ; to German erudition, German writing, German poetry, the poetry of all nations, the poetry of the Ancients, of the Orientals, its connection with history real or mythic, real *and* mythic, the history of languages, the great families of language—etymology—and its concord with its deflexion from the lines traced by language—the Caucasian races in particular—the Turks ; and on, on, gently rapid—rapidly deliberate, like the lighting of mesmeric trains of gunpowder, did all these topics receive fresh true colours and distinctness in Ashill's mind, from the electric touch of his companion's genius, whose fine voice, modulated by a thousand inflexions, could utter, did utter, without display or parade,

but as naturally as if all men spoke all tongues, specimen words of many, many languages and dialects—a very Mezzofanti he seemed, and yet he knew all their histories minutely too ; and yet he was, after all, peculiarly distinguished as a decipherer of the older forms of speech.

Sir de Vere Sylverton had retired some little time, when his servant came into the room and approached Agnes. He told her to announce gently to Lady Sylverton, that his master had just been taken ill. Agnes terrified, beckoned to Avice, Avice came quickly, but gently, across the room ; she had seen the servant, and guessed his mission.

“ He is ill, Agnes, and you are to say so ? ” she asked rapidly.

“ Yes,” said Agnes, trembling. “ Oh ! will you do it, Avice ? ”

“ Ought I ? ” said Avice ; “ will it not alarm her more ? how am I to do it—what is the illness ? ”

“ A fit of oppression and choking ; oh, go quickly ! ”

Avice paused not, but instantly went gently up to Lady Sylverton, who was in the adjoining room, and said to her, “ Will you come, dear Lady Sylverton, I must ask you something ;” she put her hand upon Lady Sylverton’s with a quiet authority of manner, and leading her out upon the staircase towards Sir De Vere’s room, “ You are wanted,” she said, “ my dear friend, in Sir De Vere’s room ; he is not well, and I am coming to see if I can help, or send for the doctor ; but you *must* let me attend you.”

Lady Sylverton would have rushed into the room ; Lady Avice opened the door and let her in slowly, knowing that hurried respiration would endanger Sir De Vere’s life. He was lying back on his chair, in his dressing-gown, struggling for breath, like a child in croup, and making a fearful sound with every breath thus hardly obtained. It was well Avice was there ; Lady Sylverton for once was quite unnerved, and could only cry out, “ Dr. B., Dr. B., send for him !” The servant had already done so.

"Bring the hottest water you can," said Avice, "and a sponge," and therewith when it came did she foment the struggling throat and chest of her host. After persevering in this for ten minutes, she had the satisfaction of hearing the dreadful sound soften, and gradually cease; she then proposed to the servant to give him twelve grains of ipecacuanha, but this was resisted, "as he did not usually take it."

"Then is he subject to these attacks?" she asked.

"He never had one like this," said Lady Sylverton in tears.

The application of a mustard plaster was now tried, but it did not relieve as the fomentation had done, and the patient, with rolling and blood-shot eyes, looked to Avice imploringly; she resumed her post, sponge in hand, and had succeeded in giving relief again, when the door suddenly flew open, and Hervie Ashill hurriedly entered with Agnes. The invalid, frightened by the sudden movement, became fearfully agitated; the veins stood out in his brow and

temples ; the labouring of his chest and whole frame was fearful ; his hands turned blue. Avice relinquished her sponge to the manservant, and directed him to continue undaunted. Lady Sylverton gave him salts, and Avice stepping up to Ashill, said :

“ Will you go and say how ill he is, and dismiss everyone for us ? will you also send your man, if he is here, for further assistance ? Agnes will tell you the nearest—and take care of her ; she is not strong.”

Poor Agnes, indeed, was fainting away ; she was carried to the boudoir and her maid sent to her. Lady Noel and Mrs. Montfort went home ; but kind Mrs. Byngham slid gently into poor Agnes’ presence, and tried to re-assure and comfort her. But Agnes had been elated by her pleasant evening, and now felt so utterly desolate (partly because she had been so *very* full of enjoyment) that, to her excited fancy, the walls were ready to fall upon them, the ground to open under their feet, so sudden had been Sir De Vere’s attack.

Hervie Ashill's mission to give an account of its severity, was received with looks of horror from almost every one. One or two there were, who not seeing the suffering, set down the alarm as unnecessary; but a dead weight seemed to overwhelm the greater number, and though several dispersed at once, some lingered, unable quite to leave the house of their beloved and excellent friends, without knowing how it fared with them. Mr. Byngham came to seek his wife, she looked up imploringly, and said she could not leave Agnes.

" Dear William," said she, " no one is able to attend to her, and she is very miserable : let us comfort her."

" But what am I to do, if you stay, Edith ? How can I get on without you ? It will be so uncomfortable—do come," added he, fretfully ; and without another word she arose, and allowed her shawl to be put on by him ; but when he said, " rather nice, is it not, the colour of her dress, upon the dark-blue sofa ?" She, for once, turned from him, unable to endure think-

ing of maize tints upon blue, when the poor form they adorned lay helpless under severe trouble. She put her arms tenderly round Agnes, and kissed her fondly—blessing her, as she bent her stately brow over the poor little faded face, that had been so fresh and fair that evening when they met. Have beautiful lips peculiar power?—at the contact of those perfect ones, an electric thrill seemed to pass through Agnes, and she began to be less wretched. Mrs. Byngham was hurried away; but she had fulfilled one impulse of her woman's heart—she had poured soothing balm into a sad and terrified spirit; she had revived the fainting soul.

Poor Agnes! she was one of the pretty blossoms that bloom every year fresh upon our sight; she had little character or form of principle to assist her in ruling her impulsive nature, and less heroism altogether, than generally lies enshrined in the fair bosoms of those young creatures presented at each year's Drawing-rooms, and the after-history of whom,

could it be known and told, would comprise full many a tale of peril, distress, and agony nobly borne.

We must, however, only add one more reflection, and then return to the sick-room, and this reflection is: Can an education that fits young and lovely things to act as heroines, be altogether faulty? No! but perhaps fewer would be the heroines of undisciplined romance, and fewer still of ideal miseries were it *sounder* and *deeper*. Minds of true stamp will always be noble; but education *might* ennable the feeble or hasty; at least so it seems to me. *Mir Scheint so.*

But, no longer moralizing over poor little Agnes, let us draw near to the room whence proceeded such painful sounds. All, all is still now. Calm and beautiful is the face of the dying man;—gentle Wisdom on her last couch—the fearful tension is over, the suffering has ceased, the doctor is arrived; but cannot do anything—all is silent!

“Is the clergyman come?” asked some one.

He had been sent for, but was too ill to come. True, they had known of his illness but had forgotten it. Who will read prayers to the dying ?

His faltering lips murmured “ Madeleine.”

She tried, poor Lady Sylverton, but could not do it, and then he smiled such a heavenly smile on Avice, and whispered :

“ Avice, ‘ My trust hath been in the Lord, therefore, I shall not fall.’ Pray for me, dear Lady Avice, in the words of the Holy Church, and in your own words.”

Clear and solemn rose the sweet voice of Avice ; distinct and beautiful, though sad, did it sound forth, the prayers for the dying.

She ceased, and he motioned to her to go on ; she repeated some again ; he still was not satisfied. But she understood now, and lifting up her voice she prayed in Scripture verses that she knew by heart, and as she was repeating “ Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee,” he murmured—

“ ‘ Yea, when I awake up after Thy likeness,
I shall be satisfied with it. Into Thy hands
do I commend my soul.’ ”

Yes, it was all over ! Poor Lady Sylverton’s grief was so intense, so perfectly overwhelming. Agnes’s seemed to have been exhausted at first. Avice thought she would announce it to the lingering visitors, and to the household. She appeared upon the stairs—she thought she said, “ He is really gone, all is over,” but she remembered nothing afterwards, and required to be told that Hervie had seen her go out upon the staircase, had exclaimed, “ He is dead, he is dead, and I killed him,” and had sunk down in a fit of frenzy—that Sir David and Mrs. Banfield had rushed after her, and seeing her try to speak, told the sad news to the household and guests, and carried her between them back to the drawing-room, where she had slowly recovered speech and recollection, and had hastened back to her poor friend ;—passing by Hervie, who, though no longer raving, seemed sunk in impenetrable distress—that she had

murmured to him as she passed “ It is the Lord, not you Mr. Ashill, who has done this thing ; be comforted”—and that he was instantly soothed and cheered.

Avice’s recollection only enabled her to recall the miserable scene that awaited her in the room of death. The calm, composed face of the corpse—the utter desolation of poor Lady Sylverton—the tears of Agnes and the maids—and the statue-like sorrow of his own servant, who still knelt at his side, and supported him, as in his last moments.

It was now necessary to lay him upon the bed, and clear away the vain relics of aid, which had been proffered in his sufferings. It was necessary too, to take the unhappy wife, his own ‘ Madeleine’ away. Avice approached her, but she turned away—Avice knew why. She remembered her calling her that time, when in the midst of life, she was called to scenes of death —poor Lady Sylverton ! Agnes and her own maid were now present, and they persuaded her to rise, and go away with them.

For many, many days, and weeks, did she require careful tending. Avice and Agnes were indispensable to her. Their cool hands were ever binding fresh-dipped bandages round her burning head, the pain whereof was incessant and agonizing ; if in the night the moisture was dried up, she screamed aloud, delirious with the pain, until fresh were applied. Her weakness was extreme, and many of those who came to attend the funeral of their father, uncle, or friend, thought from the accounts they heard of her, that she would not live. However, at the end of three weeks she was able to sit up, and within six to be moved to the sea, whither Agnes accompanied her. The place selected was Dale, in South Wales.

In a very small house, in a very dull street, yclept Norton Street, whose severe ugliness makes the eye rest upon a very shallow and ill-looking shop-front, purporting to be a good place for beer, wine, and spirits, &c., as a relief to the very flat-featured uniformity of the street, lived Colonel Macbrae, when in town, for reasons

good enough, but peculiar, and with him lived not Hervie Ashill ; he so cordially detested that quarter, he vowed the air and everything was less pure there ; he had a friend, a needy man, though rich, in Belgrave Square, and the said friend was always willing to give Hervie a room, upon terms of ready money and no board, whenever he needed one.

It was not therefore Hervie whom his friend now saw walking stealthily up the street, carrying a covered basket with great care, as if it contained mice *au berceau*, or a pint of canary seed, of all things the most slippery.

This young man, rather good-looking, tall, and slight, in a whitish coat, and tolerably neat hat, with crape on it, wore, moreover, a pair of trousers of the kind alluded to by a certain wit, who, seeing a notorious friend of his at large in a very new pair, some days after he had been apprehended and taken to the Queen's Bench, said to him : " Ha ! ha ! modern Samson, brought away *the bars* too, have you ?" A Court pattern it certainly was, and not too fresh, the

owner might have outrun the author many times, and have gone “a tidy bat” every day, between from Rotten Row to St. Pancras moreover, for a long season in them, by their appearance.

This youth knocked at a door, nearly opposite.

“ Beer, spirits, and Macbrae,” and it was opened by such a pretty woman! and out of the window peeped such a sweet smile, and such funny laughing eyes.

“ Lucky dog !” said Macbrae savagely, “ that’s his “ hosterinn,” and he is taking her *bonbons* !”

No, no, Allan Graeme, poor fellow, had no *bonbons* to give, and no “ hosterinn ;” the pretty woman was his step-mother, the sweet smile his half-sister’s, and the whole party but a small one, compared to those often assembled there ; and all this time there was one far away, whom you would never have suspected of coming from such a sordid little place. This was Agnes Sylverton’s home ! You think this strange ? You do not believe it possible ? That a young lady in the *beau monde* should have a home with

not one of the characteristics of the *beau monde*. That her mother should open the door to her brother-in-law, and that her sister should shake her curls at him at the window. Well I once, dear reader, thought so too. I do not now require you to believe it ; I only throughout my tale (which is not a regular one), profess to give you pictures of things as they appear to me. *Mir Scheint*, for one of the advances we have made of late years is assuredly this, that liberty of opinion is more admitted every year, we are at length rather inclined to admit, that the same green spectacles do not suit all eyes.

We are not now scandalized at a man, simply because he requires different forms ; and propositions that once might have startled us, do so no more ; not because we see mistakes less clearly, but because we do not demand that all should see as we do.

We must not follow Colonel Macbrae and his dinner party, poor old veteran ! He was not very old, but his marriage had quite been a mill-

stone to him ; he had dashed down at once, and if he now and then rose to the surface, it was beyond the splash originally made by his descent.

• CHAPTER III.

“ We need not bid for cloistered cell,
Our neighbour and our work farewell ;
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high,
For mortal man beneath the sky.

The daily round, the common task,
Will furnish all we need to ask ;
Room to deny ourselves—a road
To bring us daily nearer God.”

KEBLE.

IT was six o’clock by all the good, true church clocks ; and as good Sir De Vere Sylverton’s sudden death occurred on the 9th of July, and Macbrae and Ashill had made good their retreat, as soon as Ashill’s week of low

fever (consequent upon the shock), was over, it was now the middle, nay, past the middle, of the month, and every one was in mourning, we all know why, because of the good and royal Prince who had passed from among us on that same day. It was very hot, and a glorious eve on the 15th of July, no chance for St. Swithin, and even up to the Thursday, the 17th, it was fine, and the little household in Norton Street had agreed at breakfast that morning that it was too hot to eat dinner. Poor little children ! there were four under fifteen ; they had done no lessons, had no play, the boy's Latin was *difficilissimus*, and the girl's music a *crescendo* annoyance ; and poor little rosy Marion had not smiled till the good half-brother came home. Allan, good fellow, had been honoured with approbation at his little desk in Messrs. Wiley and Long's, and the prudent solicitors promised to give him a little return for all the trouble he spared them, he working infinitely harder than their last man, who had had good wages. But they took him for his mother's sake—her hus-

bands, both Mr. Graeme and Mr. Sylverton, having employed their house, so that though one died a ruined man, and the other before his situation of Progotosthenos in the Court of Chancery had enabled him to provide more than a slender jointure for his wife, and £1000 among his six children ; they thought it most magnanimous to take Allan without premium in the place of a third clerk, who was leaving them.

Allan was now twenty-four ; and Agnes, the eldest of the second family, belonged almost constantly to Lady Sylverton ; while Marion, her next sister, was still with her mother, assisting her with the education of Dora and Jessie, who were, the one just fifteen and the other eleven, the latter extremely pretty, but very delicate, smooth regular features, short upper lip, and a profusion of auburn, or rather deep brown hair, of varying lustre, that hung round her in rich waves, terminating in the prettiest ringlets, as closely-winged—

“As tendrils of the vine ;”

and eyes of a genuine hazel, deep and serious.

Their mother, a refined but most energetic woman, contrived to attend to them in part, and send her boys to attend King's College, at least the elder of the two, Ronald ; and Archie was to go also when he attained the renowned age of twelve, to which he was very near. In the mean time a young man of extremely small means accepted five shillings a-week, and gave him two hours a day after he had finished his daily work, as an *employé* in a printing and publishing office. Hear this, oh ! ye luxurious ones—five shillings a-week for teaching !—exactly what the most economical must pay for washing ! Archie was a very good scholar it must be owned, clever and industrious, and as fond of Johnnie Must, as he here called himself, as if he had been his play-fellow, ay, and much more so. He reverenced him, he could appreciate his fine intellect, and his noble struggle against poverty, and his little secret charities, of which Archie alone ever knew ; and sooth to say, the affection and devotedness of this boy were his one solace in life. Johnnie Must, poor fellow,

thine were a most interesting tale, a tale for young and ardent minds, and one day they shall hear it if I live, and if they like my way of telling facts, scenes, and stories as they seem to me.

Mir Scheint, you see it is still.

I should like to show you more of Archie's home—the strict simplicity, the saving, of their life there—the oneness of heart that existed among them all ; and the oneness of intention, that poverty should not make them illiterate or coarse. Even the fair little Jessie understood this, and would say, in her frequent indispositions, " No, mamma, no dainties for me ; we can't afford them and learning, too ; we must not sink down, you say. Some day, when Archie is a great, clever man, we shall all be glad you did not spend money upon our fancies, but upon his learning." And she spoke " the sense of the house." No one sighed after superfluities. The very idea of economy seemed to be part of their living ; but once Mrs. Sylverton had had a great alarm lest it was too

much so. She heard Ronald doubt, in a conference with Dora, whether he could afford to give relief to a very poor family, whose mother was ill. She rose from her work instantly, and calling to her only servant, a girl of fourteen, she told her only to send up half the brown loaf for tea, and to take half the tea remaining in the caddy, and the broth remaining from dinner, and carry them into the next room. When they were ready, she called Ronald, and said, "Wait, my dear, I have a pleasure for you. Take these little parcels, and the broth to poor Mary Tibbs, and tell her I will come round and see her in the evening."

Ronald stared, and looked at Dora ; Dora looked at her mother, and a smile passed between them. Directly the boy was gone, Dora was sent to her music, Jessie called to read, and there was no more said till tea-time, when, some one observing that the tea was weak, Dora and her mother again smiled ; and a light came into Dora's eyes that awakened Ronald's. He said,

“ Yes, I see it now, mother ; it is better for us to drink weak tea, than for Mary Tibbs to have none ; but yours is the worst of all, dear mother ; do change with me.”

“ No, no,” cried she, laughing, “ I chose to do the deed, and I must abide by it for the present, Ronald.”

But no child took a second cup, and hers was therefore good, or, at least, better. Poor Jessie, indeed, looked parched with thirst, and could not eat, and her mother insisted upon giving her more to relieve that feverish thirst. Perhaps you think all might have had more, and better tea, and have carried something extra to supply Mary Tibbs ; and that all this was trivial and unnecessary. Ah, my good friends, your shadow is a mere blank outline ; your portrait you expect to find life-like, in an infinite variety of little strokes and shades, tints and touches, that give the perfect resemblance. Is it not so ? Then have patience with me, and with Dora’s mother ; for she, in her desire of bringing out characters, and I in

my wish of representing them, are not wrong to use large outlines, and little touches too—
Mir Scheint!

Some such act of self denial had taken place on the day on which Macbrae saw young Allan approach his mother's house, and on which he brought the good news that he was to receive, at least, £20 a year, "which," said he, to his mother, "will release you still further from all charge of me. I have already, you know, £20 from my uncle's legacy; and I have been lately making something by copying and engrossing out of clerk hours; so that I hope soon to be quite comfortably well off, with economy; and as a little extravagance, I have brought a little treat for tea. So saying, he uncovered his basket, and it was found to contain two pounds of rich, ripe cherries.

Jessie's eyes danced as she looked at them, and Dora's glistened. Their mother looked up from her work. She was making a black evening dress to send to Agnes, for which she was to be paid. Yes, Agnes' mother was thankful to

make clothes for her child to look well in. That is not so extraordinary ; but she submitted to being paid for them. At first, when Lady Sylverton, with the utmost *bonhomie* had proposed it, Mrs. Sylverton's whole heart swelled against the idea ; but on looking round to Dora, who was patiently turning over a wretched grammar ; at Jessie, who was standing by Marion to have her threadbare blue muslin frock patched ; at Ronald, whose trousers and shoes were dusty indeed, and he had none to change ; she felt that even this humiliation ought not to be one to a subdued and chastened spirit ; and she accordingly dipped her pen into the ink, and passing her hand over her eyes once or twice, and sighing one deep sigh, she wrote a very graceful and well-turned acceptance ; and thenceforth so it was, she dressed Agnes, and Lady Sylverton paid her.

Well, then, on the evening in question she was working at the black barège dress of her pretty Agnes, and thinking how sweetly pretty she would look in it, when Allan's cherries

excited the whole group of young things, and they drew forward to the tea-table. Jessie was near her mother, and delighting in seeing her enjoy the rich fruit, she took several cherries of most perfect form and colour, and fed her mother caressingly, not observing how she in her eager haste dropped the juice, and made the enforced eating much less pleasant than a voluntary action to the same intent would have been.

Before tea was over, Mrs. Sylverton was obliged to resume her labours, and taking the dress, was finishing off the trimming of the sleeves, when she felt a slight wetness or humidity upon the part that lay in her lap, and on holding it up, perceived that her little Jessie's attentions had endued the front of her own dress with libations of cherry juice, of which two large spots had communicated themselves to the skirt of Agnes's dress, and made two of the flounces perfectly useless without a new breadth in each. Conceive poor Jessie's dismay ! The dress was to be called for early next morning ; it was part of a large order of mourning which

was to go to Agnes at Richmond, and there would hardly be time to put in the new pieces. However, Agnes's mother went out directly, and soon returned with the material.

"Mother," said Ronald, "what is barège a-yard?"

"About 1*s.* 10*d.* or 2*s.*, my boy; why do you ask?"

"And how many yards have you bought just now?"

"Two and a-half," replied his mother: "those flounces are deep and full."

Poor little Jessie crept close to her mother, her eyes full of tears.

"Ah! mamma," said she, "my carelessness has cost you five of the shillings you work so hard for; and now I am afraid you will not have finished it in time. May not I help you?"

"Yes, my dear, by reading your 'History' attentively to yourself, and so allowing me to finish my work uninterruptedly."

Jessie obeyed; but there was more than this intention in her little mind. About five weeks

afterwards, she slid 5s. into her mother's hand, and with many tears entreated her to take it—an entreaty in which Dora joined. These two little girls had darned house-linen for a neighbour of theirs, two hours every morning in their bedroom, as soon as it was light; and having been paid at the rate of 2d. or 3d. a-day, had accomplished their object. But this is forestalling—my present object is to observe that the dress was finished, but not in time to go with the rest of the melancholy supply; whereupon Ronald and Marion were allowed to go to Richmond and take it to Agnes the next day. And we here take leave of Agnes's family for a little while.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Oh, not in cruelty, not in wrath,
The reaper came that day,
'Twas an angel visited the green earth,
And took the flowers away.”

LONGFELLOW.

“ Et moi, jeune convive, au festin de la vie
J'apparus un jour—et je meurs.”

It is time to see what retreat the fair Avice has found. When Lady Sylverton went to Dale, Avice returned home to Eaton Square ; while there, she resumed her daily life, she made breakfast, amused her parents, she wrote to her brothers at Eton and Harrow ; she

visited several poor people as a District Visitor, she dined out, and attended the few concerts and breakfasts still sprinkling the end of the season. She also made acquaintance with her sister's new governess, Mademoiselle Eurilia, a Sicilian, under whom Fanny and Amy were to become learned in Mediterranean learning and languages (and if that basin be indeed the nucleus of original civilization, as maintained by the great cosmopolite philosopher, this were no mean aim). Avice delighted in her acuteness, if not research ; she admired her versatility of mind, and the variety of her topics for conversation, but she a little mistrusted her principles.

There was a want of repose and ballast about her observations of men and things, and a glitter in her eye, that seemed to hint at her having known passions more stirring, than the love of literature, or even science, and having passed through scenes more exciting than Fanny's and Amy's school-room could afford. Once, indeed, she surprised her in tears,

through which her eyes flashed fire ; and upon Avice's expressing her sympathy, she at first refused to explain ; and then burst suddenly into a very tornado of invective against her destiny, far more like the exclamations of a heathen, than of a christian, though of course no actual imprecations escaped her lips. Avice, though she could not repeat anything thus discovered, resolved upon telling her mother how little such a mind as Mademoiselle Eurilia's seemed to her fitted to form and cultivate those of children.

But when she seized her opportunity to deliver her conscience from this burden, her mother heard her but listlessly. She had been well assured of her principles and character, she said, from the recommendations she brought, and from the opinion of Mrs. Linchoyd, with whose nieces she had been about three weeks, and left them only because they were going to Paris, where she had no wish to go, she said ; in short, the fair Lady Keffsdale had been completely dazzled by the brilliancy of her

talents, and provided Mrs. Linchoyd had nothing to say against her, was bent upon believing Mademoiselle Eurilia perfect.

She had been with her since May, but we all know how easy it is to keep up a character for two months in London ; and, excellent mother as Lady Keffsdale was, she did not “do impossibilities,” in the way of getting up early, and eschewing all society ; and she had had such a pretty half-sister with her all the spring, and it would have been “too cruel not to let poor dear Katie see all the best houses, and go to all the best things ;” so that even during Avice’s absence at Charamille Seymour’s, Lady Keffsdale was still occupied in the fatigues and triumphs of a *chaperon* ; and indeed it was purely as the giver of pleasure that society could induce her to join its ranks, and show her pretty sparkling countenance in its gay crowds.

Dear Lady Keffsdale ! who could have helped loving her ! Oh, loveliness in daily life—thy name is woman ! But more of her hereafter ;

we return to her boudoir, where, amongst her prettinesses and convenient arrangements, she sits at her work, as fresh as the roses she is busied upon, and listens a little, but thinks more about Avice herself; while the latter gently and delicately tries to sound her opinion of Mademoiselle Eurilia, and to give her own openly.

Do not mistake Avice, my readers, she was no spy ; she had no idea of repeating the words of agony, wrung, perhaps, from a full heart. Mademoiselle Eurilia, had she been asked would have said at once, that the *dame sensible* of Avice had already been a solace to her ; and it was not until Avice had often and anxiously conversed with her, and tried to elicit something reasonable in reply, that she ventured to inquire how far her mother had been satisfied about her ; for Avice had been so much away, that she had not been very *au fait* of the arrangements.

While they were talking, they heard a sound which they supposed to be the children coming

in from walking, which rather surprised them, as it was quite early. However, this break in the conversation released Lady Keffsdale from further explanation of her last too decided opinions respecting Mademoiselle Eurilia. She proceeded to unfold to Avice the real subject of her own meditations. Lord Keffsdale had been planning a little tour in the North, and, passionately fond of his children, had decided upon giving the two youngest girls this treat ; but they were first to go out of town, with their governess, to Southend, to await the arrival of the boys from school. Avice immediately saw what was coming, and said :

“ Charamille will receive me, mamma.”

Lady Keffsdale laughed and coloured.

“ I do not want to get rid of you, my dear ; but you see, six is just the number for a railway carriage—the two boys, the two girls, your father and myself. Mademoiselle Eurilia will have a fortnight’s holyday, and when we bring the children away from Southend, she may accompany you to Richmond, and leave you

there. The painters, &c., commence operations here on Monday, and I must get the children out of the way."

"I have only one suggestion to make, my dear mother," said Avice, "and that is, that I should go to Southend also with the children."

"No, my dear, I want you here, unless you are afraid of the paint."

Poor Avice blushed.

"Oh no, mamma, of course not; if you stay, surely I can."

"Are you afraid, then, of Hervie Ashill? Take care, Avice, if you do not mean to say 'Yes,' do not be asked the question."

"Very well, mamma: thank you for the caution," said Avice smiling and not undecceiving her; "but I shall not see him again."

At that moment he came in, unannounced. He was very grave, and one glance at the countenances of Avice and her mother, showed him that they knew of nothing unusual having occurred.

"I wish," said he to Avice, "to take a lesson of you, Lady Avice."

"Indeed!" cried both ladies, "and in what art?"

"In the art of telling bad news," said he, mournfully; "I have some to take to a lady, and my heart fails at the prospect of doing the deed. Can you, who know so well how, inspire others with your own high courage?"

"How odd he is since that scene at Richmond, with poor Sir de Vere," said Lady Keffsdale to herself: but his meaning look carried Avice's thoughts there too, and further, into his real distress, and in a sudden agony of terror, she cried:

"Oh, tell me! tell me, Mr. Ashill, at once; do not try any good way, but tell me at once."

"There has been a great crowd here," he continued; "a child has been hurt, and is carried in here; and I have to go and tell its mother."

Avice saw the whole truth, and turned so pale that her mother went to open the window.

“ Oh ! why does not she see it ?” whispered she to Ashill ; “ tell her I am gone to bring her an account of the child,” and she flew down the stairs, and into the dining-room ; there lay the little creature, and it was her own Amy—her treasured little sister—she was just being laid upon a sofa. Avice desired one of the housemaids to bring pillows, &c., and asked who was gone for a doctor. The child knew her, and its fearful screams ceased ; a faint smile—oh, how did Avice shudder as she drew near that little lovely form so mutilated ! It was necessary to undress the little creature, by cutting off her clothes ; Avice’s châtelaine scissors were ready, and with tender care she and the nurse cut off the little clothes, and covered up the poor broken arm, the crushed form of this sweet darling. The crowd had been pressing in at the door ; Avice went to them, and entreated them to be quiet, and disperse ; thanked them for their good feeling, and desired them, in pity, to put down some straw as quickly as possible, every noise adding to poor Amy’s agony.

The doctor was now come, and Avice sent the nurse to see if her mother was at all able to come down. Hervie sent her back, saying that poor Lady Keffsdale was gone to the west room to compose herself, and would come down as soon as she could. The dressing of the fractures was very terrible, and Avice was thankful that her mother was absent. At her suggestion chloroform was tried, but the action of the heart was so fearfully accelerated by it that they dared not repeat the experiment. She stood, or rather knelt, by the poor little one, bathing her face with eau de cologne to relieve the excessive nervous agitation which the pain caused, and admiring the extraordinary patience of the child which was indeed wonderful. Poor Amy bore the re-dressing and setting of her arm and foot without a groan ; but when the great surgeon proceeded to examine the ribs and other crushed parts, her screams were agonising ; she writhed and shrieked in torture, and could only say, "Pray God make me patient !" while her whole face was convulsed,

and her hands and limbs quivered in excessive pain.

Nothing indeed could be done, and the doctor's face told Avice how vain it was to look for recovery. She drew him aside, and said :

“ How long ?” with white lips.

“ A few hours,” he replied, mournfully. “ I dare not promise more.”

“ Can you stay with us?—with my poor mother ?” said Avice, as the door slowly opened and Lady Keffsdale, evidently dreading the sight about to meet her eyes, came in. Avice and the doctor advanced to meet her ; her eyes asked, “ Is there any hope ?” and he immediately answered :

“ That she will suffer less presently, yes ; that she will be restored to you is, I fear, impossible. The internal injury arising from the external, makes me fear that the vital parts are fatally hurt.”

Lady Keffsdale did not hear—she was gone on to her child, and had drawn aside the hand-

kerchief that covered the broken foot. She knelt down beside her.

“ My child ! you will be better presently, Dr. Hamilton says—my poor Amy.”

“ Mamma !” said the child, ceasing to moan and opening her eyes, “ oh ! mamma, do you know it ?”

Poor Lady Keffsdale’s tears fell fast at that word, Mamma ! the first to take the place of the piteous moans.

“ Do not cry, mamma, I am not much hurt,” murmured poor Amy. “ God is with us always, and I am going to Him. Kiss me, mamma !”

What a long, long kiss was that ! Amy tried to follow it, when at length it withdrew ; but the movement caused her to shriek aloud, and for some time she could not be stilled—her pain seemed to be redoubled. Dr. Hamilton tried everything to soothe her, but in vain. Nothing did, till Avice tried putting a little cushion under her back. She had noticed that the bending of the body seemed to bring

something against the injured part, and she thought that supporting the back might, as it were, expand and relieve the broken bone or muscle from the contact. She told this to Dr. Hamilton, and he said :

“ I fear to try—I dread adding one degree to all she is suffering.”

“ Do not I ?” said Avice sadly ; “ yet I will try, if you think it may possibly be as I think.”

“ It is very possible,” he replied.

And Avice, trembling in her very heart of hearts, at touching the beloved wreck of her beautiful little sister, passed under her a scarf, with which she slightly raised her.

“ What are you doing, Avice ?” said her mother. “ Don’t disturb her !”

“ Dear mother,” said Avice, “ Amy is easier so ; look,” and she directed her mother’s attention to the child, who indeed was moaning less fearfully.

“ But you can’t hold her so,” she rejoined.

“ Yes, I could, but I think a cushion will do as well.”

She gave the sign to the nurse, raised Amy a trifle more, and saw the cushion gently slide in, without causing any shock or pain. She then gently let her repose completely upon it, and the result was that the child opened her eyes, and said :

“ Thank you, dear Avice.”

Avice’s eyes for the first time filled with tears—she could not speak—she had borne seeing Amy suffer, and hearing her cries—she could not bear to be thanked by that little quivering voice for giving her relief. But it was no time for weeping. Where were Mademoiselle Eurilia and poor Fanny? Their father too was at the House, and must be told ; but hitherto no one had thought of him. Yes, Hervie Ashill had sent him a note, and he was just come in, and Avice must go to him. She found him sitting in his room, bowed down with grief—the grief of the noble heart of a father. She went to give him courage to come in and look upon his dearest of all, his pet, his Amy—not simply ill, not simply passing away in a natural

way, but trampled upon and spoilt, her very self crushed, perhaps her very identity destroyed.

“Is her face hurt?” he asked.

“No,” replied Avice.

“Thank God!” he said.

Now, my dear Lord Keffsdale, why, when you hear you must lose your child, do you thank Heaven for her sweet face being unhurt!

Oh! reader, reader, are you so free from all the “tender, tearful, wildling flowers,” that blossom round our sternest and simplest passions? Do you merely love a person, a thing, for its actual value, and not for all the sweet memories clinging about it, the fair hopes born of it? So long as you must lose it, will you not care to keep it unharmed to the last? must not your last look at it be a look that takes in all its charms? Could you bear a recollection of your noble tree blasted—your favourite hill levelled—your own house burned down—your beloved one wounded? Lord Keffsdale trembled lest poor Amy’s sweet face should shock him; he was afraid of being afraid at her

aspect, at the terrible shadow of the calamity he must suffer. Ah, that shadow, it was there already. Blue and faint were the lines about the mouth when her father and Avice came near ; and the former wrung the hand of the doctor, and pressed that of his wife in agony too great for speech. He stood silently beside her, his chest heaved, and his breath came short ; at last one deep, deep sob burst forth : “ Amy !” he cried, “ my own little darling !” but she moved not, and her groans were very weak now.

“ Fanny ! where is poor Fanny ?” said her mother at length ; “ fetch her, Avice ; let us see her safe.”

She had not thought of her before ; engrossed with one poor child, the other had been forgotten. Avice went out of the room, and proceeded up stairs. There, pale and shuddering, clinging to the bannisters, crying and lonely, sat poor Fanny. She felt so very, very miserable, afraid to go and look at poor Amy, yet near enough to hear her screams—longing to know

all that was going on, but not at all sure she might go into that sad room. She had seen her father come in. She had so wished he might see her and speak to her ; yet when he came in sight she shrunk back lest she should see his sorrow ; and he did not go up stairs, so she remained unnoticed. When Avice came to her, she threw herself into her arms, and cried so bitterly that Avice could not speak to her. She only caressed her, and that soothed the child. Presently her tears ceased, and she began to talk rapidly.

“ Oh, Avice, it was dreadful ! there was such a crowd, and poor Amy under the cab, the horse just ready to step upon her, when he was being backed, and Mr. Ashill seized the wheels and kept him from moving. Such a noise ! and they brought her out, and said—”

Here her voice failed ; she could not repeat what they had said.

“ What did Mr. Ashill do next ? Was it his cab ? ” asked Avice quickly.

“ Yes ; but he was not in it ; his friend was,

and he drove up quickly to speak to him ; and just at the corner we were going to cross and come into the Park, and then came the noise and confusion. I found I was at home, I do not know how."

" Where was it, Fanny ?"

" At Stanhope Gate. We were going to cross from Dean Street, and Mr. Ashill was in Stanhope Street, and the cab coming down Park Lane very fast. Oh, she looked so dreadful, Avice !" and the little girl, highly excited, ran on to describe the whole scene again, dwelling upon Hervie's kindness—how he had sent her on in the cab, and had a litter brought for Amy—till she was brought back to the point by Avice's asking where was Mademoiselle all this time ? Fanny hung down her head. Mademoiselle had been to a house in Curzon Street, and a shop in South Audley Street ; and having, she said, one more visit to pay, desired them to walk up and down once or twice, and if she did not come, to go into the Park and walk slowly towards " Achille," as she called

the statue, for fear they should be late. Fanny, a little proud of the honour, did not demur, but Amy said :

“ Maman ne nous permet pas de nous promener ainsi, toutes seules, mademoiselle ? ” “ Eh bien donc, va, je ne le reverrai point ce bon et fidèle ami. Je m'y soumets, Aimée. Mais dépêchez-vous. Je vais seulement demander l'heure qu'il est ici près. Je vous rejoindrai avant que vous serez à la barrière ; ” and they saw her turn back into South Audley Street, and soon after, growing themselves a little impatient of waiting, Fanny had proposed going on, as they had been desired. Amy however hesitated ; but her sister told her “ it could not be wrong just to cross over ; that could do no harm.”

“ And you have not seen her since ? ” said Avice, pityingly accosting her, before she went over again the harrowing part of the tale, for she saw it was enough for Fanny to bear the confession of her having urged poor Amy to take the fatal step.

She was however better, and though she felt sick with crying, and the tears that fell so hot from her eyes, had chilled and purpled her hands and face, she did not now shrink from going back with Avice into the dining-room. Avice herself, anxious as she was to hear how all had happened, had been too wretched to ask, and was still too wretched to linger; and but that poor Fanny's state had required the liberty to pour out the tale that oppressed her, Avice had still been ignorant of the actual manner of the event.

If we lose a ring, every circumstance is quickly inquired, quickly told; if a child falls, the cause is immediately discussed; but in a great sorrow, when the signet of our right hand is plucked away, when the very idol of our hearts is broken, the bitter, bitter agony absorbs every thought—there is no room in our bursting hearts for inquiries, how it came to pass. The cloud is over us, we ask not whence it came, when the lightning flashes in our eyes, and blights our fair, fair flower.

Avice rose from the stairs, and raised Fanny. She passed her arms round her waist, and the two went softly together into the dining-room. Directly their father saw them, he rose and came towards them, and folded Fanny silently in his arms.

Avice went towards the sofa, and looked at the child. She was quite calm, and seemed to be asleep, and so she remained many hours, while daylight faded into evening, and evening into night ; and still the family sat round her, and Avice and her mother, by the doctor's orders, occasionally renewed the wet applications, which were intended to keep down the inflammation of the wounded limbs.

At last poor Fanny, faint with headache, was carried up stairs by her father, and her mother consented to lie down in the study, next door to the sick-room. Lord Keffsdale sat in the arm-chair, and soon fell asleep. No sleep visited the poor mother's eyes, but her grief was so excessive, that once laid down, she had no strength to call or move. Her

strength seemed to be completely gone. Avice now and then went in, and seeing her eyes closed, murmured a fervent “God bless thee! my poor mother! God comfort thee,” and retired.

Preternaturally acute, the mother’s ear heard all that passed in the next room. It was very little, for of course poor Amy’s sleep, if it gave no hope, was at all events present relief; and as long as that silence, or few words now and then spoken lasted, Lady Keffsdale, poor thing, could repose, as much as nature would allow. At length her hearing became indistinct, and she tried to get up, and see whether the silence was real or imaginary: the effort made her faint quite away.

In the meantime, poor little Amy opened her eyes. The doctor felt her pulse, it was fluttering feebly. Avice sent the nurse to call Fanny, if awake, and went herself to call her father and mother. The latter was perfectly unconscious, and the nurse returning, Avice called her to attend her, while she went back to Amy, whose

eyes now bore that strange startled look, so often seen near death.

“Amy, dear,” said she, “are you better, darling?”

The child raised her well arm, and touched her sister.

“Are you really here,” said she, “with me, and do you hear the song?”

“What song, Amy?”

“He shall feed His flock—and carry the lambs—come unto Him—weary and heavy laden.”—Yes, I am weary;—He will bear me in His arms. Mamma! mamma!” exclaimed she, with a sudden change of tone; “they are come for me! I know that my Redeemer liveth!”

She dropped her hand, which had rested on Avice’s arm, and lay still. Her poor mother, roused by that sweet ringing call, was wheeled in by her husband and the nurse, on her couch; Avice was kneeling in prayer. Suddenly Amy spoke again:

Mamma! Avice! pray for me! it is so difficult!”

Avice, her voice trembling, once more led the prayers for the dying, followed by the low, faint, sobbing tones of the parents, Fanny, and the nurse. When she came to the Lord's Prayer, Amy followed her almost inaudibly. At last she said :

"Mamma! good bye; do not cry, I am so happy now—it is so beautiful, dear mamma—good bye—you know we shall all go there, dear mamma; good bye—kiss me!"

She gave one sweet smile to each but Avice, and they all kissed her; Avice was the nearest to her on the well side still, and they were all watching the quiet sinking of her breath, and the doctor with his finger on her pulse. No sound was heard; it was too solemn, for who would not listen for the angel's wings, that were waiting to carry away that young loving soul. Ever and anon a deep sob was heard, half stifled; it was not one of themselves—it was the doctor; used enough to scenes of sorrow, but touched to the quick by this. Her own parents and sisters wept not aloud. They

seemed to hear a voice saying : “ Weep not for her that dieth ; peace be still.”

It was about half an hour since Amy had called her mother.

The father and Fanny knelt together. The mother lay upon the couch, close to her on one side. Avice and the doctor were on the other side, and the nurse at the bottom ; but there were more—three more in the room.

Those poor dear boys were come. Hervie had been to Eton, and fetched one ; and sent for the other to Harrow, and told him to meet him at Paddington ; and the poor child, shivering with horror and dread, and cold, had done so ; and all three had just crept in, noiselessly, and knelt down by nurse.

They were only just now seen. Hervie’s hand was caught by the father, and pressed warmly, but he instantly hid himself from the others. The boys were signed to by their father to come near and kiss Amy, and as they did so she just smiled, looked at them, and said:

" Hubert ! Alfred !" in a weak, low tone, that made the poor fellows weep convulsively.

Avice bent down, and whispered something to her, and she replied :

" Yes, all glory now ; Heaven is my home. I am quite, quite safe, for Jesus Christ's sake. Avice, you taught me to love him."

She turned her little face to her, with such a loving smile.

" Comfort mamma," she added, and Avice bent to catch the last words ; they were " Lord Jesus," and those eyes closed upon all she loved on earth, to open face to face with Him, whom she had so loved in Heaven ; with Whom her heart had been, even while she walked the earth with baby footsteps.

The violent burst of sorrow from Fanny and Alfred, and their father, aroused Avice ; she felt herself supported by kind arms, but she felt too, too utterly weighed down by sorrow to inquire whose they were. Not long, however, did she thus give way, she sprung forth from her forgetfulness of others with a pang of self-

reproach, had her mother gently moved into the next room, and soothed her father and the two poor children, and turned to thank Hubert for his care of her :—but it was not Hubert.

Hubert was weeping silently over his little sister, his own darling, his favourite. He then asked nurse the how, and when, and all the sad details which she knew so little ; and then approaching Fanny, as a better informant, he led her away by degrees into another room, and thus changed, in some degree, her thoughts. Alfred soon followed them, and their father went to his wife, who, poor thing, was weeping herself to composure.

Avice turned to thank Hubert, but it was not Hubert, it was Hervie who had supported her, and who now drew nearer to her silently, and stood looking at the poor little form, and then at the heavenly calm face of the dear child, gone from among them.

Avice did not wonder at Hervie's being there, and he did not explain it. She was so very,

very much exhausted by the horrors she had witnessed, that now that the necessity for exertion was over, she did not feel as if she could inquire into anything, or be surprised at anything ever again. She neither spoke nor wept, but threw herself upon her knees beside the child, and her whole frame shook with uncontrollable motion.

Hervie felt what we all feel when in the presence of strong agony—such a sense of littleness, of inability to soothe or cheer—such a conviction that He alone who smites can heal—and yet such a yearning to testify sympathy. He did what one only feels can comfort, he lifted up his hands, and prayed for her. He could neither leave her nor speak to her, still less could he remain unmoved.

At length poor Avice recollected herself, and arose. She gave him her hand and said:

“Good bye, and may God bless you for all your kindness to us, and to our dear Amy.”

The last words were inaudible, but Hervie understood them well, and his heart, as he left

her, glowed with purer pleasure than it ever had before. He left her, feeling the sadder and the wiser.

That day that was dawning—oh, how different to the morning before—found Avice watching by her little sister's corpse. She had never fulfilled this sad duty before; she had never before sat alone and looked upon death; and death had come this time in a very terrible manner upon a very lovely creature. Amy had been her own cherished pet and darling. The little creature had smiled when Avice prayed for blessings upon her, long before she could speak. Long before any one supposed her to be alive to serious impressions, would she escape from her nurse, cross the house, threading her way through passages and galleries, till she came to her sister's room, where she would petition for admittance, and when let in, ask Avice to pray for her, “for she had been very naughty.”

As she grew older, her eye would meet her sister's when, in the daily reading, or in church, some favourite verse, the subject of one of their

frequent loving discourses, would occur. To her she told her pleasures, her young fancies, and above all, her troubles ; and when unwell she would creep into her arms, lay her little silky head upon her shoulder, and murmur, “ I am better here.”

As Avice went over in her mind these faint outlines of the history that could never die out of her recollection, she seemed again to feel that little head upon her shoulder ; the slight weight (that troubled her—never, never—no more than the letter we have just received, which we delight to feel is safe in our possession), upon her knees. She raised her arm to press the loved treasure closer to her heart, when the movement, void and vain, aroused her to a sense of the actual state of this, the loved, once instinct with life.

Need we tell the mother’s agonies ? Her memory, as clear and faithful as Avice’s, went back further. She could remember before Amy was a counted member of her nursery ; she could tell the days she had fulfilled in watching

prayer for the unborn child ; she remembered the fair face she had dreamed her child should have. The petty strife in her mind, whether to occupy her thoughts and eyes most with manly or feminine beauty, and the decision that real beauty both of mind and body, would befit either her son or her daughter. She could recollect how she had guarded herself from impatience, lest even her merry and sweet disposition should, by momentary irritation, stamp her child with the curse of a peevish temperament. She recollected her longing to speak of her hopes to Avice, and the miserly delight with which she had deferred telling any one all her dreams for her treasure ; she remembered praying so intensely that her baby might be sanctified from its birth, its baptism, its first step, its first words. She recalled one day upon which a trial had occurred. There was a relation of hers who was hopelessly deformed, and more than usually disfigured by the misfortune. This relation had been ill, and was come to town for advice. She did not know Lady

Keffsdale was in town, and therefore one of their mutual friends told Lady Keffsdale it was not necessary for her to visit her; and under the circumstances, not fair by her child to do so. She was inclined to yield; but the vision of her poor suffering friend and relation, alone in a lodging, with only a maid and a painful complaint as her companions, weighed upon her mind.

Lord Keffsdale did not think much of the objection, but advised her "to do as she thought fit," (a regular man's counsel); and recollecting that, "He who bid us visit others in their affliction," was the same whose Hand made and fashioned all our members, and without Whom nothing is made, she resolved to trust Him with her baby's form, and obey Him, and her own kind longing, to comfort the lonely and desolate.

She had never had any cause to repent her kindness. Her poor friend died, after long sufferings, during which Lady Keffsdale's visits were her only solace—and the little child, born

in due time, was as fair in form and feature, not as the receiver, but as the guardian angel of those kindly visits.

“ How vain,” thought the poor mother, “ now seems all this care for thy growing-up, my child ! Thou art made perfect in Heaven, and thy little life is hid from my loving eyes ! Happy child ! I would not recall thee ! No ! my little Amy ! sweet, pleasant child—go—stay—and may my other children follow thee !”

But it is needless to follow her, poor soul, in her grief. She bore it, as a holy mother should do, but as few can. The iron entered into her soul, but there was transmuted into fine gold, and offered up with frankincense and myrrh.

CHAPTER V.

“ Oh, why hath man the will or power,
To make his fellow mourn !”

“ Oh, Truth, Truth, Truth !”

“ Wahrheit ! Warum so oft bist du verborgen !”

AVICE and her brothers accompanied their father to the funeral of little Amy. Fanny, poor child, was so dreadfully shaken in nerves by the whole occurrence that she was quite ill, and unfit to go through anything more. She was more grieved than she wished to show by Mademoiselle Eurilia’s non-appearance. Avice could imagine excuses for her, in the dislike she

would naturally feel to returning to them after such a distressing accident, in which too, she might so well accuse herself of carelessness, to say the least of it. But Fanny could only see that the greater her sense of the misfortune, so much the greater should her eagerness be to come, and either exculpate or condemn herself, as its cause.

"I am sure, Avice," said she, "if she cared for us, she would wish to know all about us."

"Perhaps she does know," rejoined her sister. "Perhaps she is hovering about, longing, yet dreading to meet us, and inquiring continually after poor dear mamma."

"Do you think she knows all about us, Avice, and poor dear mamma's being ill in bed, and yet never offer to help us? I do not think she can be so cold and unkind. I am sure any one who knew us, could not help coming back to us now, in our trouble," said Fanny sadly.

"It makes a great difference though, Fanny

dear, when people think they have at all caused the trouble," said her sister.

"Perhaps it does, and perhaps I am mistaken in Mademoiselle, but it seems such a case for kindness and friendliness. How kind Mr. Ashill has been! and he is not one of our own household, not particularly interested about us, yet how kind he is!"

Avice assented.

Hervie had indeed been most attentive; he had called daily, but without asking to see her, while Lady Keffsdale was most ill, and asking of the nurse most minutely how she was, had forbore to disturb Avice. This day, however, he did send up his name, it was about five in the afternoon, and Avice was alone. He was admitted—but her heart beat at seeing him again, after all the sad history, he was now associated with.

He came to make an offer to Lady Keffsdale of his house; a small and very pretty place upon the coast of Dorsetshire, just beyond Swanich. He was sure, nothing would be so good for her

and Fanny as the sea air ; and he knew that they knew people enough to find amusement in the neighbourhood, when they wished it ; and for the present, when seclusion was most to be desired, it afforded perfect seclusion. He was going up the Rhine himself, to begin by travelling in Belgium, and seeing it thoroughly ; and the house would be “the better for being lived in,” he said, with a smile ; it was very small—that was the only objection.

Avice, touched with his kind consideration for her poor mother, promised to mention the proposition to her, and thanked him hastily.

Hervie did not like being thanked—but he did like the expression of Avice’s face as she spoke, and he looked at her very earnestly, till she hoped he would leave off before the colour came into her face. The blush did come however, softly lighting up her whole countenance, and Hervie thought her very interesting.

As he rode away from the house he fell into musings as to the connection of that delicate creation, the soul—with its mirror, the human

face. He pondered upon the intricacies of thought and feeling, and their many shades, and their ever-varying manifestations, and Roma's face, with its rich sudden blushes of damask roses ; and Lady Keffsdale's pretty deepening scarlet tint on either cheek ; and Avice's deep, clear, rose-coloured cloud, mounting through her delicate pale cheek, came before him ; and then he thought of the lovely vision in the garden, and wondered whether she ever blushed ? he decided that she did—that the owner of so lovely a little foot and ankle must possess a perfect organization ; and in women he held that no perfect organization could exist without this language of the “eloquent blood.”

While deep in these instructive thoughts—perhaps you think them strange occupation of his mind, after leaving poor Keffsdale House in such heart-wretchedness ; but my dear good friend, the train of thought was not very unnatural, considering how much he had seen of Avice lately ; and that only very lately had she manifested her power of blushing ; and, moreover,

that she really occupied Ashill's thoughts very much just now, though without either being the least atom in love.

No ! Hervie Ashill was not yet recovered of his former passion, and Avice—ah ! do you think Avice had never, never loved !

I trust Avice appears to you a very woman —gentle and intellectual, useful and refined, gifted with all the sweet instinctive tact and feeling—the cultivated thought and quick perception, that we love to call woman ; and can such a one be devoid of the capability for deep, and loving passions ? Can such a one live twenty years, and not have those capabilities called forth ?

Had Avice then never loved, think you ?

I will tell you this another time.

While deep then in these instructive thoughts, Hervie was interrupted by the voices of Macbrae, and another friend who was riding past him. Their horses and themselves were perhaps less perfectly appointed than his steed and

himself, but they were very good-looking knights, thought he, before he saw who they were.

Mrs. Macbrae required her good husband's presence : he had been away more weeks than he had been married years, and she thought this unfair ; he was therefore on his way to Belgrave Square to bid Ashill farewell, and his object being gained by meeting him at Albert Gate, he proposed to his companions to forsake the now half-empty Ring, and ride up the Park with him on his way to his lodging in Norton Street. Young Bendhu, as Archie Ross-Leslie was commonly called, was very well up in all the stories current upon the subject of poor little Amy's accident ; and late as it was in the season, the story had passed through "coral lips and lips moustachioed," enough to have given rise to fifty varieties, all more or less "false and yet true," of the original and sufficiently melancholy tale. As they passed the spot, Hervie sat idly listening to the last new report, which was "that a young foreign governess, and the officer

who owned the cab that did the mischief, had arranged the meeting, and their own flight, that in consequence took place." Mademoiselle Euri-lia's non-appearance was much talked of, and though Hervie with a sad smile appealed to his own identity with the owner of the cab, as a contradiction of this variety of an "over true tale," he could not vouch for Mademoiselle's being also producible.

"And where is Campbell, who was driving your cab?" asked Macbrae.

"Oh," said Ross-Leslie, "he is one of us, and changed from our barracks to Knightsbridge yesterday—and I know he is in town, poor fellow, he was quite tucked up about it; but he is all right again now."

Often and often had poor little Amy's fate been commented upon in Hervie's presence, and although good feeling was very generally expressed upon the catastrophe, that cut her young life short, yet we all know that when our finer feelings have been called forth upon any subject—when we have been admitted into the

sacred precincts of sorrow—seen the undisguised agony, the unheeded tear, the sobs unchecked, the convulsive shudder unconcealed—that some dire calamity has occasioned, we feel for all and with all. How coldly then fall even the most feeling terms in which the compassion of the world, in general, is couched ! How sensitive and tender our ears, our hearts ! We know it is wrong to expect others to feel as acutely as we do, the horrors they have not seen ; but we are very much troubled at their not doing so.

Macbrae parted from Ashill and Ross-Leslie at the corner of Norton Street. Ross-Leslie was mounted on a fiery little chestnut-horse, that reared and curvetted whenever a horse that had been accompanying it passed before it ; and upon Macbrae's doing so the commotion it made was very considerable, and a faint scream was heard from a very lovely girl who, with two younger children, was passing at the moment. Ross-Leslie sprang off, thinking she was hurt, and Colonel Macbrae looked around. Ross-Leslie was crimson ; the girl looked up—in-

stantly lowered her splendid eyes, and hurried into a house that was nearly opposite Macbrae's lodging. The two children ran after her; she sent the boy back, to say that she thanked them much, but was only frightened, and not hurt.

Ross-Leslie was generally reckoned a calm man, but his perturbation on this occasion was considerable; however, they parted from Macbrae, and turned their horses' heads southwards, leaving that dull street and its busier environs, and coming down as far as Berkeley Square in silence. Hervie was thinking of the Macbraes' curious marriage, and Ross-Leslie probably knows what he was thinking of also. Presently he asked Hervie to "come and see if Binglinnin is at the 'Coventry,'" and they rode down Berkeley Street together. Hervie Ashill asked whether the story of the highwayman, or of the horse running away with a gig down the steps of Lansdowne Alley, were the most true and authentic? Hervie was a little inclined to be erudite about places and their histories. Ross-

Leslie did not know, but thought “Binglinnin would know—Binglinnin knew everything and everybody—Binglinnin was elder brother to Ethelred Kent; did Ashill know Kent?”

Ashill longed to know whether Roma Somers was generally supposed to have cared for this said Kent; and he tried to make Ross-Leslie talk about him. This was not difficult. Ross-Leslie spoke of every one’s affairs, and had no scruple in saying how he had once admired her himself quite madly (as *they* talk of madness, who are far too empty to be in danger of it); but though he knew all the *on dits*, he said, this one was purely a mistake, and a very stupid one, as she never looked at him, nor he at her, though they met every night. Ethelred Kent’s marriage had, nevertheless, surprised every one.

He had seen May Fairford once, twice, thrice—had proposed at a breakfast, and received an assent under a magnolia. His father had

sworn "enough for both," he said; but a decent settlement was made, and Ethelred was married, while the young Viscount Binglinnin still rolled his eyes, and twirled bouquets in every ball room in search of the prettiest and the wittiest coquette, and the wildest and most extraordinary topics of conversation.

In his passion for novelties, Avice sympathised, and he had caught something of her equally strong, but more elevated taste for that which is new. Hers did not preclude a real reverence for that which is old, and good also; but a general thirst for increase of knowledge upon every subject. When with her he did not flirt. Avice was no pattern of perfection. Her bane was a too great fear of "what would be thought of her."

No, she was no perfection! But do we not all experience an elevating influence in the society of some individuals? They are by no means faultless, yet invariably in their presence our conversation is better than usual — less worldly, less common-place. They by no means

affect to be superior, either in intellect or virtue to ourselves ; and yet charity, intelligence, and courtesy, grace not only their conversation, but that of every one in their presence. The secret is this : They have a purpose in life ; they do not pass through life unintentionally.

“ Nor fortune, nor beauty, nor pride,
Nor the summit of fame, nor of taste
Can confer, or affect to decide,
Or annul this distinction in haste.

“ But thirst after wisdom, all pure,
And worship of truth, all divine,
This wonderful charm can ensure,
And, dear one ! ah, is it not thine ?”

Lord Binglinnin joined his friend, and they pursued their way together. There was no particular elevation of tone in their conversation. Hervie Ashill, though he rode with them, was not much liked by their coterie, and had not the gift of laying himself out for others, unless he could really serve them or please himself in so doing.

Hervie called early the next day ; Avice told him of her mother's pleased acceptance of the very kind offer, and their departure the very next week was soon decided upon. Avice was to go to Charamille, there was no room for her, and her mother was very earnest in her wishes to have this clearly understood. Hervie was sorry, he wanted Avice to know Thorncliffe, yet he saw her mother's ideas were quite correct—if she imagined him to be seeking Avice's affections ; but neither of the young people was troubled with any such consciousness : simple friendship was theirs. Hervie told her, he had heard that Roma and her husband were at Dover, and that she was very ill ; also that he was himself to start for Belgium the next night, and had put off all engagements in consequence. His visit in Oxfordshire was to take place on his return to England. He told her, moreover, that Agnes Sylverton had left Dale, since her aunt's sister had arrived—that Agnes was with Mrs. Macbrae, and that Mrs. Herriott, a great follower of Lady Sylverton's, had offered to take

Marion who was a distant connection of her husband's also, to unite with her in imitation of Agnes' having been the protégée of Lady Sylverton, and that they were to remain in town the whole autumn, while the Sylverton family were to occupy the house at Richmond. At length he withdrew; and Avice went to make some arrangements before their departure, and to amuse her mother as well as she could.

CHAPTER VI.

“Pleads she in earnest—look upon her face,
Her eyes do drop no tears—her prayers are jest.
Her words come from her mouth—ours from our
breast.
She prays but faintly, and would be denied.
We pray with heart and soul.”

Es war eine Irrthum—und es hat ein ganze Leben
ungefertigt.

IT was now nine days since Hervie's departure, and his absence certainly made a great difference to Avice. She thought over his history ever since she had known him or heard of him. The death of his mother, and his grief, though not four years old, his peculiar

trials in consequence, his irritable temperament, his indolence and yet enthusiasm, his deep piety and never-failing kindness to all in distress, his own agony when his father died while travelling with him in Russia, his seclusion, and his tardy return to the world, &c.

Now we know no one can hardly love him whom she remembers in a dirty pinafore, unless there be extraordinary congeniality of disposition—or no one else—and yet he evidently occupied her mind. But Avice had only to glance but a little way, and she felt that there was no love there. It was luxury—luxury she seldom allowed herself, to go over in spirit those former days, when a loving loyal heart had beat high in her bosom on the day of her presentation, with devoted affection, to our precious Queen, and had very shortly afterwards been spell-bound by “the mind, the music breathing from one face”—the face of Ethelred Kent!

She remembered of course the room in which he was presented, at his own request, to

her—that was nothing remarkable; but she recollects also the very waltz that was sounding in her ears, the very harmony of his voice with its tones, the very glance of his glorious eyes. She did not waltz, and he conversed with her till it was over; she remembered every meeting during two successive seasons.

She remembered his proposal—oh! so well. She remembered her authorised acceptance to, and how perfectly happy she had been.

But one day, in the summer of 1848, she and her father, and Ethelred, were all staying with the Sylvertons, when her father suddenly informed Ethelred that there was a difficulty. “Ethelred owned to none; his parents were then in India, and their answer could not arrive for some time, as they were moving about up the country; but he did not fear any objection—they had long known of his attachment, and never disapproved of it, or commented upon it. What could the obstacle be?”

“Lord Keffsdale’s great grandfather had died insane!”

“ At what age ?”

“ At seventy-seven.”

“ Is that all ? That is no obstacle at all.”

“ One may die of anything at seventy-seven, it is true, but your father has a horror of madness ; he will make it a difficulty ; but here is Avice.”

“ Does she know it ?”

“ Yes, certainly, she does.”

Avice drew near, and the conversation dropped. Lord Keffsdale, however, was in so exceedingly nervous a condition, that he had no peace lest this marriage should not take place. And now comes a very extraordinary part of my story : his restlessness was so incessant, that he would walk about the whole day, and often came upon Avice and Ethelred in their walks. He frequently held an old sermon in his hand (for he had been in holy orders, until his elder brother’s death, without wife or babes, made him a peer), and armed with his sermon he would say, “ Go on and do not mind me, I am reading.”

One day, while they were talking, they wandered deep into the woods, and were too late for dinner. Lord Keffsdale privately told them that he would bring them back in time, if they liked to go there again; and a few days afterwards they did start early in the day, and wandered down the same paths again. They went on, and on, expecting to find him, and giving the subject far less attention, than the effect of the sunshine in each other's eyes, until at length they found themselves near a village church. Service was just over, and Lord Keffsdale came out with the congregation. He proposed to them that he should marry them privately; Avice was horrified! Ethelred surprised, but not very much shocked. Lord Keffsdale produced a special licence, pleaded to Ethelred the fears he entertained of his father's refusal to Avice, dropped alarming hints of the state of his own health, and advised her to let him "give her away before he died," till she was quite unfit to reason with him, and was led bewildered in the church. The clergyman did

not know any of the party, but he had waited, and Lord Keffsdale handed a ring to Ethelred.

Avice was perfectly passive, quite lost to all comprehension ; she thought her father mad in earnest, and looked at him in speechless terror. She felt so shocked at his thus thrusting her upon Ethelred, so grieved to be the victim of such indelicacy, that she neither resisted nor realised the fact of her being married, until he murmured, “ My own, own Avice !” after the ceremony.

This day they were in time for dinner, and no remarks were made ; the marriage was, of course, a profound secret, and Ethelred was obliged to go the next morning to attend circuit, so that even the ordinary looks of intelligence ceased to have any scope for their pointed and very new wit. Meanwhile, Lord Keffsdale was, the whole day of Ethelred’s departure, exceedingly restless. Avice saw him turn pale, and put up his hand to his head several times ; she was quite frightened, but as her mother was in Scotland with her boys ; she

would not write at once ; still she was convinced that some uncommon ailment was upon him ; his thirst was excessive, he tried to laugh his illness off, but the quiver of his eyelids, when he laughed, showed how great was the pain of such an effort.

Avice entreated him to go to bed ; he would not, saying, he knew he should not sleep. However, in the night he shrieked aloud, and Avice, who was sitting up in her room, afraid to go to bed, went in, and found him in a high fever. It was brain fever ; her mother came, and for weeks his life was a most precarious existence. When he began to recover, Avice shed bitter tears over her folly, in yielding to his solicitations, now so evidently a mere phantasy, caused by disease ; for he never mentioned it, even to her mother, and appeared entirely to have forgotten every circumstance of his visit at the Sylvertons, except his illness. When Avice next saw Ethelred, she told him this ; she told him that there was virtually no witness but the clergyman, whose name they

had better discover. He was struck by the vigilant prudence of her love for him, and owned that he had never thought about their requiring produceable witnesses.

Avice gently rallied him for caring so little about the matter, but though she spoke gaily, she was pained a little in her heart. This was in Eaton Square; when Lord Keffsdale was able to be removed to town, but still a prisoner to his own rooms, and too weak to see any one.

“Even a son-in-law?” asked Ethelred.

“Hush!” said Avice, “he has forgotten that folly of his.”

“Folly! you wished me to secure my witness’s name, Avice?”

“Yes, but I still think and trust that papa in his senses would never have—have pressed you so,” said she, colouring, till her eyes were full of tears. “I do not wish you, Ethelred, to think it binding at all; you are free whenever you please; but I did not wish any one else to have the power of interfering, do you under-

stand ? and therefore I wished you to secure the witnesses being forthcoming ?”

“ And am I not to consider my promise binding, Avice ?” said he, looking into her lustrous eyes, and kissing her hand lovingly.

Poor Avice ! she dwelt long upon that interview, it was the last very dear pleasant one. After this they met always in a crowd, and Ethelred, afraid of being detected, flirted a good deal with other girls, not indiscriminately, but one for a week, another for ten days, and so forth.

Poor Avice !

The recovery of her father was slow, and she went out but little.

“ Poor Ethelred, he had many temptations !” Avice sighed, and looked in her glass. “ So many lovely fresh creatures, and I so little gifted ! and so dispirited !”

The summer of 1849 passed away thus. Ethelred’s parents were kept abroad by divers causes ; but at last in January 1850 they arrived. They did not disapprove of his intentions, but they “ desired delay.”

“Wait till your brother is married ; you come second, you know, Ethelred.”

Ethelred’s love, perhaps, had cooled a little, while he thought himself safe, and only free to amuse himself during a limited time ; but this reply fired pride, love, and daring all at once, and he rushed to Avice to remind her that she was his wife ; to desire her to fly.

With modest firmness she refused ; he reproached her with not caring for him.

“Wait two years ! Yes, you can wait well enough ! I am not so cool ! I must be rewarded now for my long, long patience. Avice, come with me ; I may command you ! You have promised to obey me.”

Avice trembled with strong emotion.

“Ah, my beloved Ethelred ; but you have promised to honour me ; is it honouring me to tempt me to sin so grievously ? Do not tempt me, Ethelred ! Heaven knows how weak I am to oppose your entreaties.”

Her glance, her voice softened him ; he was no longer angry with her ; but he went forth.

When next she saw him, his mother was trying to make him civil to Lady Grace Millefieurs, while he was devoting himself to May Fairford.

Pretty May Fairford knew nothing of his history, and was pleased with the attentions of one so very charming. She was a very good, sweet little girl just come out, ready to believe herself in love, and her partner too—but no coquette. She was enchanted to be engaged, *trousseau'd*, and married in June, after having appeared first at a ball in Eaton Square in April.

Avice stung with noble self-pity, looked at herself in the glass once more to see why she was so to be deserted, and wept as she reached this point in her history. Her eyes, dim with sorrow; with marked tears, suddenly dilated with alarm, she saw another head beside her own ! Other eyes ! another face ! She did not shriek nor faint. She turned quickly round, and exclaimed :

“ Mademoiselle Eurilia !”

“ Ah Lady Avice, pardonnez-moi ; je suis la créature la plus malheureuse qui existe. Vis-

je encore ? Peut-on dire exister ? Car depuis dix jours je me cache, je vis comme un rat, sur des entrées peu accommodées ; je vous assure je demeure avec les taupes, craignant la lumière, ne cherchant à sortir que quand il fait nuit close, et venant rôder tout autour de votre demeure, autrefois si charmante ; n'être accueillie que de reproches, ne recevoir que larmes pour toute réponse à mes questions, sur la santé de vous tous."

" Se peut-il, Mademoiselle, que vous ayez été si près de nous ? et nous vous avons cherché de toutes parts !

" Oui, Lady Avice. Dieu me pardonne toute la douleur que je vous ai causée. Comment aurais-je pu rester parmi les humains, et ne pas tacher de savoir de vos nouvelles. Bien que j'eusse trop de peur, trop de honte pour me présenter devant vous jusqu'ici ! Mais enfin, je n'ai pu résister à l'entraînement que j'éprouvais ; encore souffrais-je cruellement de toutes les courses pénibles que j'ai faites pour arriver tous les jours plusieurs fois chez vous. Je me sentais excessivement souffrante : (dans ce mo-

ment même, j'ai des douleurs inouïes dans tout le corps : je suis épuisée de fatigue et de froid;) j'étais malheureuse. Mon cœur déchiré pleurait d'un côté ma faute, ma charmante élève, de l'autre mon ami, et ma position cruelle. J'ai pensé à vous, Lady Avice ; je me suis dit et redit, il faut se jeter sur la générosité de Lady Avice ; elle qui pardonne, qui aime, qui sait montrer la bonne voie à chaque âme égarée ; elle me recevra, elle ne me repoussera pas, lorsque errante, brisée de repentir et de douleur je me présenterai devant elle à l'heure où elle remercie Dieu de ses bienfaits, et pleure devant Lui les imperfections même de ses vertus !

“ Me suis-je trompée, Lady Avice, eh non ! Sans cette douleur que j'éprouve au côté je me jetterais à genoux devant vous, pour vous implorer de ne pas me renvoyer, cette nuit au moins.”

“ Je n'ai pas la moindre intention de vous renvoyer, Mademoiselle ; mais comme mon petit frère couche dans votre appartement, je vais

m'empresser de vous faire coucher ici, chez moi, et je n'accepterai point de refus. Vous êtes malade, je le vois; vous êtes triste, je le crois. Ne parlons plus de ce qui ne peut pas se guérir: mais occupons-nous des maux qu'on peut soulager."

She sighed once deeply, and then assisted Mademoiselle to bed, lighting a fire, and fetching her some chocolate which she made upon a little Soyer stove in a very short time, and giving her all the luxuries of hot water, soaps, &c., of which she had apparently somewhat patiently endured the want.

But she could not bear to hear Mademoiselle speak of Amy. One little mention of her in the most cursory manner, in the midst of a long flowing speech, (the composition of which must have amused her during "her courses," and which did not at all blind Avice's eyes to its manifold contradictions, and its probable want of veracity throughout,) one little allusion to the poor child whose death she had caused, was as much as Avice could bear. Heartless as she

thought Mademoiselle, she however waited upon her as a sister, and did not lie down to sleep upon the sofa till the *douleur au côté* had allowed Mademoiselle to slumber profoundly.

CHAPTER VII.

Thekla.

Sie haben mich in meinem Schmerz gesehen.
Ein unglücklicher Zufall

Hauptmann.

Ich fürchte, das Sie meinen Anblick hassen.

Thekla.

Sie waren nur die Stimme meines Schicksals.

Schiller.

It required some skill and tact to announce to poor Lady Keffsdale and Fanny, the return of Mademoiselle Eurilia. The latter indeed sobbed so piteously that Avice, laying her sister's head upon her bosom, could only reassure her, with promises, that she should not see her that morning; and Fanny, to make sure of it,

breakfasted in bed. The boys knew nothing of it, but papa must be told. However, he hurried out so early that the boys had not finished, and Avice would not speak before them. While she was pondering how to tell her mother with the least shock, a letter was brought to her from Roma ; it was written in great distress :

“ Come to me ! dearest Avice, come ! I am so ill ! Alfred is obliged to be out a great deal. Oh ! please do come ! for I am so very ill, and you will do me good—you always do, you know.”

This note, being carefully shown to her mother, proved an excellent introduction for poor Mademoiselle’s story. Lady Keffsdale answered :

“ Yes, you ought to go, dear ; I fear poor Roma is very ill. But whom can you take with you ? I want nurse for the children ; Fanny is so delicate now, poor child ! and my own maid I cannot spare. Your brothers are too young to take you down. How I wish poor Mademoiselle Eurilia were here ! She would just do.

"Well, dear mother, I dare say we shall find her; I inquire every day—she comes daily, but till to-day, I have had no traces of her at all!"

"And now you have—poor creature!" sighed Lady Keffsdale, "how does she seem to be, poor thing?"

Avice told her how ill Mademoiselle was; but added that she thought a little rest would restore her.

"And where is she, Avice? not very far off, I suppose, as you have seen her."

"No, my dear mother, she is not far off."

It was a beautiful trait in Lady Keffsdale, that as soon as she heard of poor Amy's accident—when she left Hervie Ashill to go and pray for strength—even in that dreadful moment she sent a kind message to Mademoiselle Eurilia, supposing her to be in the house. In the same spirit, though she turned paler than ever at the idea of seeing her, she now desired Avice to say that she would do so as soon as Mademoiselle was able to go out; and when Avice told her that

she was actually in the house, she exerted herself to write a pencil note to her, full of kind tenderness and pity.

Lady Keffsdale, indeed, had accepted her sorrow, not as a human infliction, but as a divine message. She was, perhaps, the most unselfish of human beings ; the charities of life all found place in her heart ; the resentments, the thorns and thistles of life were in her choked by the good seed, the more congenial product of the sanctified soil. The thistle-down and thorn-seed that spring where they rest, found no resting-place in her heart. Her nerves were now cruelly shaken, but her principles of mercy and loving-kindness were unshaken.

Avice almost worshipped her mother. She was not willing to leave her now, even to go to poor Roma ; but her mother would not hear of her staying away, and desired her to write to say, that if Mademoiselle Eurilia were well enough to accompany her, she would go on the Monday ; in the meantime, Fanny was to be assured that they should not meet.

Mademoiselle Eurilia recovered rapidly. A long sleep, and an excellent breakfast did wonders for her, and Avice felt a little as if her mother had wasted too much compassion upon her. She arose late in the day, and wrote several letters in the next room, but was not allowed to go about the house, for poor Fanny's sake.

The next day, poor Lady Keffsdale went to church for the first time since her bereavement, but it was too much for her. At the words, "O come let us sing," she made a great effort to raise her voice too in the swelling anthem, but only an hysterick shriek found voice, and she fell into her husband's arms in a pitiable state. She was quietly conveyed out of church. Her servants had purposely waited with the carriage, for they had agreed that "she could never stand it."

Every one recollects how poor little Amy had always been placed near her, and had joined in every note of praise; and many eyes had turned away, full of tears, as the poor mother came into her seat, and there was no little loving child beside her.

She told Avice that the idea of her child being amongst the angels, in "The Presence" and joining the songs of earth, filled her with such an intense and wonderful delight, that she seemed to be gone from earth too, and to hear the anthem, pealing from a million Christian churches, caught up by, and mingled with the heavenly voices, and that her Amy's was among them.

"It was such a glorious moment," said she, "and now it is only earth again."

Though Lady Keffsdale was not at all disposed to nurse up her own health, she was very much inclined to be nervous about her children. Fanny was really not at all strong ; but it was for the boy Alfred that her mother was anxious. She had shown him to several physicians, who all agreed that he was growing fast, and perhaps required a little change of air, but that there was nothing really the matter with him. However, she determined for his sake upon going on the Tuesday to Hervie's house, Thorncliffe, and Avice, and Mademoiselle, were to proceed to Dover the same day.

On the Tuesday morning they started. Later in the day Avice was preparing to take her departure also, when she was informed that two gentlemen wished to see her upon urgent business. She went into the drawing-room and found there two strangers, who told her that they were come to inform a lady, residing in her house, of a favourable change in her prospects.

They said that one of the recently-imprisoned Sicilians was a person who had, in a former revolution, obtained considerable advantages, and the possession of several confiscated estates, amongst others, that of the Castel-Eurilia family. That they were themselves related to this family, and were anxious to seek out all the members of it; and having heard that the most gifted ornament it possessed was residing with Lady Keffsdale, as governess, that they were seeking her, in order to induce her to return with them, and be restored to her station and country.

Avice, of course, expressed in her pretty

Italian, her pleasure in the intelligence, and her admiration of Mademoiselle Eurilia's talents, and left them to send down the heroine of this romantic tale.

Mademoiselle Eurilia, however, would not accompany them, and after dismissing them, told Avice that they were designing relatives of hers, whose news, though probably true, was not sufficiently certain at present, and whose intentions had always been, to dispose of her hand and property in marriage, without her consent, in favour of one of them; and that therefore she would not leave Lady Keffsdale, if she might remain with her.

Avice, of course, felt that if so, it must be upon different terms; and she asked her whether she would still like to accompany her to Dover.

Mademoiselle Eurilia said, of course she would still fulfil her intentions of so doing.

They started, travelled, arrived. Avice selected the room nearest to Roma's for herself, and saw Mademoiselle Eurilia, who was to stay

one night only, installed in the chamber prepared for herself—a much better one. She specially recommended her to the care of the maid, who had shown them to their rooms, and begged to be taken to Lady Alfred's room. Directly she entered, Roma, with flushed cheeks and excited manner, stretched out her arms to her, and cried :

“ Oh ! come to me, dear Avice : he is gone ! he is gone !”

“ Who is gone, Roma ?” said Avice, kissing her fondly.

“ Alfred ! He left me a week ago ; he was gone before I wrote to you. I would not say so, for I thought he would return, but he is not come back. Avice ! Avice ! he has ceased to love me ! he has not the least little bit of love left, and I might as well have been happy, for I don't make him so now.”

“ Dearest, hush ! do not murmur ; he may come back. What did he say he was going to do ?”

“ He said he was going to town on business.

Oh, Avice ! but he is as changeable as that sea. He might mean not to forsake me, and yet be tempted to do so—inconstant, unmanly temper !

“ My darling, you have promised to honour him ; do not speak any more of your husband, but tell me what has been your illness ; I am so grieved to find you in bed. How long have you been worse ? ”

Roma put out her thin, delicate hand.

“ Look, Avice, is it a good sign ? They tell me I am very ill, and I feel so now and then, but not always ; I do not believe I am in any danger. But what a cruel thing to leave me, was it not, Avice ? No, I could not leave him ill, and yet I did not love him, as he said he did me.”

The tears rolled impetuously from her eyes, those flashing eyes, as she spoke. Roma was slight and round in figure, with a face so full of animation, that every feature spoke ; and the varying lights of sorrow, self-pity, indignation, resentment, and contempt, were like the lights

upon the waves, ever varying at sunset ; while the emotions that Avice's countenance reflected, were the deepest sympathy and affection.

Avice felt much for her early friend ; she saw the full bitterness of such a lot ; she did not think Lord Alfred was gone this time ; but she found no hope of happiness for Roma, unless indeed she possessed the high moral courage that can bring good out of evil, and strive by a constant self-denial and cheerful tenderness, to recover and hold fast the volatile affections of her husband. But, unhappily, Roma had never loved him deeply, and though she was but little aware of the fact when she married, and had not yet had the melancholy fact revealed to her that she might love more—that there were in her soul capabilities for a stronger passion (and Avice trusted, prayed, she might never be aware of it, since it could only be that another object called forth such knowledge), yet Roma had already felt that she despised his want of stability, that she might have had a happier destiny, than to be loved at

first and then not cared for and neglected. But she did not yet look back to any one individual among her admirers with regret.

Avice tried to amuse her with the story of Mademoiselle Eurilia; Roma expressed a wish to see her. The dark and splendid-looking Sofonisba di Eurilia, or Di Castel-Eurilia, was introduced to the now pale, drowsy-looking Roma; and ere long her clever, lively conversation brought back the sparkle and the rosy smiles to Roma's lovely little face. Avice seeing how they suited, left them together and retired to her solitude. She was very weary—unhappy and anxious for Roma, perplexed about Lord Alfred, sorry for Hervie Ashill, curious about "Sofonisba" and her new prospects;—but this last thought reminded her to write to her mother. She could not think that Fanny's governess would ever again fill that position. Everything seemed to conspire against it; sensible as she seemed to be about the restitution of her rank and property, it must occupy her mind very much, and make her

instructions less valuable, even if poor Fanny ever should recover from the shock her nerves had sustained, sufficiently, to endure learning of her. Fanny was about thirteen, an age when all the feelings are most easily excited, most difficult to calm, because reason is not yet strong enough, to prevent the chord painfully vibrating, from becoming a stiff muscle, a prejudice or antipathy never to be restored to healthy action again. Without being resentful, it requires great self-command at that age, and very high considerable practical holiness, even in persons of strong feelings, to resist this tendency. Fanny had always regarded Amy as a sort of sacred deposit, and the feeling against Mademoiselle Eurilia was not only "she neglected her safety," but "she tempted me also to neglect it—she led me astray."

Such feelings were not what is called amiable, nor christianlike; but Fanny's was not yet a mind perfectly imbued with the law of love—affectionate, nay tender as she was, in daily life.

As Avice pursued these thoughts, a knock at her door was followed by the entrance of “Sofonisba” herself, with a letter to be enclosed to Lady Keffsdale; she said Roma was tired, and she had left her to write to Lady Keffsdale, to explain that she should take her holiday as before arranged, but that having friends in and near Dover, she should be ready to escort Avice back at any moment, if she should not wish to stay the whole fortnight with Lady Alfred. She mentioned her own new prospects, and expressed her desire of staying with Lady Keffsdale, if, she touchingly added, “the past might be forgiven—forgotten she knew it could not be; but were she allowed to remain, she would love them with all her heart, and obey and serve them as a daughter and sister.”

She signed herself: “Sofonisba di Castel Eurilia. Yours in all devotedness as ever.”

The two letters were given to her to put into the post, as she expressed a desire to “go out and look about her.”

CHAPTER VIII.

“ To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell,
To slowly trace the forest's shady scene,
Where things that own not man's dominion dwell ;
And mortal foot hath ne'er or rarely been ;
To climb the trackless mountain all unseen,
With the wild flock that never owns a fold.
Alone o'er steeps and foaming falls to lean—
This is not Solitude ; 'tis but to hold
Converse with Nature's charms, and view her stores
unroll'd.”

BYRON.

AVICE found much to admire in the character of Roma, that had never before struck her. Her affection for her father, and the anxiety with which she anticipated the arrival of the mail from Ceylon, where he now had an appointment,

and the pleasure with which she enumerated instances of his affection for her, interested Avice much, and served to divert the thoughts of both from their too sad, natural channels. Roma, with the greatest delicacy, inquired of Avice about poor little Amy's death ; and Avice, carefully shielding Mademoiselle Eurilia, told her the particulars. She also rather avoided dwelling upon Hervie Ashill's share in the history. She did not wish to remind Roma of him ; and she did not, by any means, intend to give her the idea that Hervie was consoling himself with her. She knew that nothing would so quickly kindle in Roma's mind a specific interest and regret, in the place of the vague, dreary longing for a better fate than she now experienced.

Mademoiselle Eurilia being gone to her friends, Avice and Roma were alone, and day succeeded day without bringing any news of Lord Alfred. At length, one day the accustomed sound of the postman's ring made both their hearts leap ; and the breakfast stood un-

touched till the pile of letters was brought in. Roma had one from her father, one from Lord Alfred. Avice, a pressing entreaty from Charamille, not to forsake the original plan of going to her ; a letter from her mother, and one from Ethelred Kent ! Her colour faded entirely upon seeing his handwriting. She had never seen it since she wrote to him, after having seen him with May Fairford, to remind him that their engagement was (though, in fact, a real marriage had taken place) still the effect only of her father's hallucinations, caused by illness ; and that, unless he really felt that he could enter upon it with his whole heart, and with his parents' consent, she would never again remind him of it, though *she* would never think of contracting any other. She was perfectly aware, now, that her conduct was more generous than consistent ; for either it was, or was not, a binding marriage ; in the one case, she could not release him, so as to allow him to form another ; in the latter case she had only to free him from an engagement which, contracted

under submission to his parents' decision, had been virtually annulled by the refusal to allow it to stand.

Ethelred's reply had been very abrupt. He merely said he thought with her, that there was no hope, and each had better be free. He concluded, by saying, "Do not, dear Avice, remain unmarried for the sake of one who, I am sure will never, never be able to become your protector ; but accept a worthier."

She remembered the keen agony with which she had read the heartless words. She recollected the shame and misery of being thus rejected, and the impossibility of confiding to any human being such a history as hers. Her mother had never known of the private marriage. Her father had quite forgotten it since his illness ; and when Ethelred and marriage were spoken of as the *on dit* of the day, Lord Keffsdale only said, "Yes, I had hoped once, that he was an admirer of Avice's ; but I never could get her to be favourable to him. I suppose he was not wise enough for you, Avice."

To which her mother archly replied :

" No, he never suited Avice at all, she preferred graver and more learned people ; but I am not sure you were right, Avice, my love—your wise men are but poor "*partis*" in general."

Avice smiled, and her parents did not see how painful was that smile.

He begged her, however, in this present letter, to which we must now give our attention, to break to the Silverton family, with whom he knew she was well acquainted, the facts which he had ascertained to be only too true : of Marion's having left London, and being privately married to a person whose name was unknown. He enclosed the newspaper account, and begged her to " forgive his troubling her, as he could not venture to apply to her mother, after the dreadful affliction he knew she had just undergone, and of which he had heard with the deepest sorrow."

There was a tone of deep respect and sympathy in the whole letter ; and Avice reflected long upon the singularity of their position with

regard to each other, and of his being the person to announce to her a private marriage. Before she proceeded to read the newspaper story, which was as follows, headed

“ SINGULAR COOLNESS.”

“ As a benevolent Lady —— residing in —— was driving, with a young *protégée*, who has been with her some weeks, she had occasion to visit a friend who was ill, and therefore, left her young companion in the carriage. She then proceeded to her dress-maker’s in Portman Street, the young lady begging to be allowed to visit her home in Norton Street in the meantime to fetch a book, and speak to the servant who was keeping the now empty house. On her arrival there she entered the house, and quietly returned, saying that her mother was expected, and that the carriage need not wait, as the latter would bring her home in the morning, and gave a note to that effect to the servant for her kind protectress. But she never returned ; and the papers two days afterwards contained an account of the marriage, very

quietly inserted, as having taken place at a church in the City." The account added, "that the greatest excitement had been caused by the event, as the young lady was so very young and beautiful, and the knight, a distinguished person residing in Belgrave Square, 'a most exemplary character.' "

Avice felt that this was, perhaps, intended as a hit at Hervie, whose strict principles were not much in accordance with the tone of the young men around him, much as the spirit and manner of thinking of society generally is, on the whole, improving day by day ; and she was glad that his being safe in Belgium was an unanswerable *alibi* to those who knew him little enough to suspect him.

The whole story excited her much. Marion, so carefully brought up, so nursed in self-denial, to give herself up to a wild fancy in this manner ! She felt that she wanted to know so many more particulars, and if my readers would like to defy the secrecy of time and space that interposed between Avice and the persons whose history interested her, we will take a look at Marion's heart, and at her position.

Marion, beautiful and self-willed, had never bent to the hardships of the lot she endured at home, as the others had done. She felt it always, though outwardly unmurmuring. It was a daily awakening to pain. And she did not accept it as anything to be met by principle. She regarded it simply as a life of *bores* to be endured, evaded, forsaken, anything but contentedly lived through and up to. Her skylight was only a skylight where she would have had a ceiling fresco-painted, a conservatory, anything rather than a skylight, and through which she never looked therefore, for the glorious sunshine, or the friendly-smiling moon, or the stars, that speak so well, so truly, to the sorrowing heart. But Marion's was not sorrowing, only vexed, and complaining.

And, therefore, she did not seek the solace of the Christian's astrology, by which the stars speak better things than to those of old, for they lead the thoughts to Him " who knoweth their number, and calleth them all by their names ;" and there is no hour of weariness too insignifi-

cant to be soothed by being laid open unto Him.

Marion had been seen and noticed often by some of Colonel Macbrae's visitors, and by one in particular, though he never spoke of her as the others did, calling her in jest "La belle vis-à-vis, de Macbrae," &c., he often met her walking with Dora and Ronald, and now and then with only a maid, or with Archie, whose volatile ways left her a minute or two unguarded, while he skipped on to look at something curious here, or listen to the clock, or ask the hour ; and on such occasions it was surprising how often the turning of the street brought one slight figure, on foot, or on horseback, near her.

Seeing her about to cross the street a little nervously, one day with the three youngest children, he had silently taken Jessie's hand, led her across in safety, bowed to Marion, and retired instantly.

Marion, after this circumstance, of which she told her mother, could not help wondering whe-

ther she should meet him again ; and her pretty hazel eyes shot out a gleam of pleasure (though she did not dare bow) whenever she did meet him. While Archie's excellent tutor, who was most devoted to her, found that if his pupil was to become his brother-in-law, the young Dora, and not his pretty Marion, must be the object of his hopes, for she listened not, now, to a word he said.

Her mother let her go out very seldom, and only at very different hours to her previous ones, "finding it better for Dora and Jessie to alter their lesson hours with the year, and secure their practising earlier, defer their reading till later, &c."

However, at this epoch in Marion's life occurred the offer of a *chaperon*; and as we have said, her mother saw her depart with very different feelings, to those with which she had seen Agnes go to her aunt. She had doubted, indeed, how far that was right; but she felt that this was more hazardous, and only the assurances of Mrs. Herriott that she would

watch her as her own child, and if she saw any reason for extra precaution would send her home before the season re-opened, this one being in its last throes,—induced her to consent.

Marion, while dining, walking, living with her *chaperon*, found indeed that she was most strictly adhering to her word; and her mother left town for Richmond, happy about her, at least for the present.

Every day a four o'clock dinner; every day a visit to a rich friend in Grafton Street; often to the library in Holles Street, and very often one to Portman Street, for the choosing, ordering, and countermanding the exquisite *mille-couleurs* of Mrs. Herriott's costume, ever varying, too, in form, gave Marion her only moments of solitude, *i.e.* during the visits. Their pretty barouche was often seen in the Ring, but not on the days of the "northern tour," as Marion called the circuit I have described, and when in the Park was eagerly surrounded.

It is quite a mistake that a new face is lost at the end of a season. Never does freshness

tell more. Marion's undimmed beauty shone out among the few pale weary countenances, like a late rose among lavender spikes.

One day, while waiting in Grafton Street, a beggar came up and pertinaciously interceded aid. Marion gently said, "I assure you I have nothing." The true words were not believed; and the footman began to push the woman away, when Marion said :

"Never mind, John, thank you. I have told her the truth, and I am sorry for her; her standing there does no harm, and no good either, poor thing!"

As she concluded, a voice, now no stranger to her ears, made her colour brightly.

"How like yourself, Marion," it said.

Yes, "Marion," and yet it spoke out of moustaches! and their owner was Marion's old haunter, now her devoted admirer. He asked her if the "northern tour" was to take place; he had discovered her weariness of her old home and of her new one. She could not deny that he was right, and often had he urged her

to escape to a happier lot with him ; and Marion had said yes.

This day's meeting was accidental—he dared to say, even providential—would she avail herself of it ? He was on leave for some weeks ; suffice it that Marion promised to be left at home during the “northern tour,” and he retired before the owner of the carriage re-appeared. When she came she was not decided where to go out, and Marion recommended the Park ; of course she was suspected of an object in saying so, and Mrs. Herriott instantly recollect ed that she “must go to Portman Street about her dress and covering.” Marion gave a little audible sigh, and then brightening up, asked if she might then call and see whether her mother was expected that day or the next in Norton Street, and get a book she wanted.

Permission, instantly given, was backed by the entreaty that if she found her mother expected, but was not yet arrived, she would stay the night with her, and send word what time she would be called for next day.

Marion, overcome, kissed her hand.

We know the rest. She was left in Norton Street. He came to the house—old Kitty said that no one was at home, when he asked for Mrs. Sylverton, but that, no doubt, Miss Marion could see him, if his business was urgent. He said it was, and that Mrs. Sylverton not being there he would speak to Miss Marion. Kitty went in to her.

“Very well, Kitty; but do you look for this book meantime—‘Paley’s Evidences’—mind! —it must be here!

And poor Kitty looked in vain, till her eyes ached, and she grew hungry, for it was tea-time, so she slipped quietly down stairs, for fear of being asked for the book, and got her tea.

Poor thing, she need not have feared!

A young couple were driving along the Strand already in a cab, one inside and one outside, and they stopped in a little street; and there was a little delay, but not long; and they drove to a church, and dismissed the cab; and the clerk opened the church doors to show them the

monuments ; and a third person joined them, properly dressed, and one produced a special license, and a ring ; and the visit to the monuments turned out to be a marriage—and the names registered were : “ Archibald Ross Leslie, and Marion Sylverton.” The former gave handsome fees, the latter abundant tears—and they were man and wife !

All this, of course, Avice knew not at present, and it is hardly fair to tell you so long a story, quite an episode, while she and her friend have other interesting letters to read.

Avice’s letters from home were not very cheerful, her mother was nervous about Alfred, and thought if Avice would not mind staying on with Roma, or going to Charamille, that they would not wait for her, but accept Lord Keffsdale’s proposal of a cruise in Hervie’s yacht for them all. Avice must not be surprised if she did not hear of them for some days, as they meant to start the first fair wind. The yacht was quite ready for use. Hervie left orders it was to be properly arranged for

them, to use it at any moment; and Lord Keffsdale understood yachting perfectly. So far all was pretty well, but her mother added, “your father is not quite himself, Alfred very delicate, but he is, in fact, less my object than your father, whose spirits are very bad. Fanny and I are better decidedly since we came here.”

Lord Alfred wrote briefly to say that he should be at home the next week. Avice's visit was now ten days old, and she thought she had better go directly he returned. She told all her news to Roma, and observed that her presence near the Sylvertons might be the easiest means of telling them all about their troubles.

“Dear Avice! if you do not write before I let you go,” exclaimed Roma, now in her old gay spirits, “if you do not write to them this day, they will know it all, and in fact I believe they do now:—bad news always flies in the dark I believe.”

Roma was indeed happy to think of Alfred's return. Her whole being seemed changed, and

the indignation with which she had intended to greet him, was entirely dissipated and forgotten.

Avice must not however leave her, it would seem as if she was ashamed of having called upon her in her time of sorrow ; “ and indeed, Avice, I have told him, whenever I wrote to him of your being with me ; and I have written to him every day, though he has not had all my letters.”

Avice had two rather difficult letters to write this day. One to poor Mrs. Sylverton, and the other to Ethelred Kent. She accomplished both, and answered her mother, and wrote to Charamille to ask when she could receive her ; and this business accomplished, she sat down with folded hands to consider her own position. It was a very singular one ; and now that her anxiety for Roma was over—that her parents and Hervie were absent, she seemed to be for a short space freed from the immediate presence of collateral troubles, in which she always took a warm interest : she looked upon herself as

perfectly unable to form any marriage at all. And yet she felt that to love the husband of Mary was wrong : “ still,” thought she, “ he is, in fact, before God, my husband first and in truth ; and although I have certainly resolved never to trouble the peace of his innocent wife, poor Mary, yet I cannot think it wrong to retain some recollections of the time when everything concurred to make him mine, or to close my heart eternally against all other ideas of love and marriage.”

Tears rose in her eyes, as the picture of her future life unloved, deprived entirely of woman’s brightest, most perfect destiny—all hope of a home where sounds the loved voice of the husband and, the merry laugh of childish joy, and the sweet soft tones of domestic worship and domestic affection, in its holiest, happiest forms—gone. When she pursued the idea how she would have loved, how bright and peaceful should that home have been, how obedient devotedness and cheerful merriment should have made their days good and pleasant, and how

the whole English world should have admired his voice, always raised on the side of mercy and humanity, always speaking noble and gentle words, animated by a spirit of holy ardour; and how she would have carried out at home among her poor neighbours, his principles and rejoiced to think that he was her own—he whom all the world honoured; and that now perhaps he could never enter Parliament, or if he did, that she would not be the one to receive him when he came home, to encourage him in his profession (the law) in the meantime, and to kindle and fan the flames of his bright but too flickering genius.

Ah, well! all this was nothing, after all, were she only sure he could be as happy with May; but she did not know May, she did not know her capacity for high aspirations or deep and abiding affections. Ah! how well could she have loved him!

Avice was not in general a person who showed emotion. Often would she quietly go through scenes, the recollection or anticipation

of which, convulsed her whole frame with anguish, and caused her such violent attacks of headache and palpitations, that she could neither speak nor see. But these once over, she arose and went forth as usual, going up and down, and doing her daily course of “things to be done” so calmly, that never, when her previous indisposition was discovered, was it attributed to mental agony; and she rather bore the character of one “who was always gentle and kind, and full of tender little attentions, but not burdened with deep feeling.”

The rocks and stones that fell into her course, did not create a visible whirlpool, or roll on with the current in noise and confusion down a cataract, but they sunk deep where they fell—out of sight; nevertheless, they were gradually filling up the channel.

On this day, when Roma called her, she was too much exhausted to reply, but arose and went down to her.

“Why, Avice, you look like a ghost.”

"Do I?" said Avice, smiling, "but I am not one, dear Roma; I am yours still to command. What did you call me to do?"

"To drive with me; but you look too ill; I cannot ask it of you."

"Oh yes, Roma, I have a headache, and the air will take it off. How soon shall we go?"

Roma was satisfied, and they agreed to go in an hour. At the end of this hour, Avice came out neatly dressed, and quite cheerful, ready to be Roma's companion. During the whole drive she remained just as pleasant as ever, and quite full of Roma's happiness in Lord Alfred's return; entering into her feelings so warmly, as to make Roma feel, more than ever, how good and blessed a thing is a true friend, to rejoice or to weep with us.

Avice herself could have no such balm for her heart sorrows.

But she had decided, that for this very reason, she must fight against any selfish

desire of shutting herself up from sharing those of others. She had, from the first moments of recognizing her lonely and desolate fate, prayed for an increase of kindly compassion, and a larger capacity for sympathy; that her friendship might become to all who loved her, a true well-spring of that relief, which Sterne calls the "Sweet source of all that is delightful in our joys, or costly in our sorrows;" and more, that she might be the means of leading the wretched and the joyous alike, to seek for a better and more perfect—even a Divine sympathy.

Avice had not forgotten to write to poor Agnes, and the news caused the most excessive consternation there. Agnes had never heard of Marion's prepossession even, and the blow came upon her with unmitigated severity. She felt shamed to her very soul, and not all the tender care, with which the letter was worded, could save her from feeling intensely grieved. The Macbraes were most kind, and to her constant cry, "take me to poor mamma," they pro-

mised that they would, if Mrs. Sylverton would not come to them.

At Richmond too, the distress was very great; Mrs. Sylverton blamed herself for her too ready acquiescence in Marion's desire to leave home. She felt that Agnes was a very different character, and that the position that might be innocuous for her, with her simple and timid nature, might be full of danger, for a more daring and rebellious spirit. She promised herself to be more careful of Dora, and she looked upon the gentle, steady child, as she brought her in the letters, and stood near her dutifully, as if to watch their effect, with a sudden rush of tears to her eyes, as she felt that she must not look for the continuance of even all that was now so promising in this dear young being, unless she contrived to give her a happier and firmer tone of principle, than she had been able to confer upon Marion.

Agnes, she knew, would soon be with her again, and, in the meantime, was safe with the good Macbraes. There was nothing to be done

for Marion, till some clue to their destination could be found. Ross Leslie had left on leave, and Mrs. Sylverton knew no one to whom to apply for news of his movements, and there was no letter from her child to her to-day, at all events.

But there was one from Avice. Avice had thought of the difficulty, and in writing to Agnes she had begged Colonel Macbrae to send her some advice, as to how to discover the place to which they were gone. He enclosed a note to Ross-Leslie's Colonel, to inquire the length of his leave, and sundry directions how to proceed for Mrs. Sylverton's benefit. He added, in his accompanying letter, that he had much satisfaction in doing anything he could to relieve her mind, for that it seemed that he had in some degree been the unintentional instrument of bringing the young Archie into Miss Sylverton's neighbourhood ; and he concluded by advising a friendly reception, "as Bendhu was independent, and moderately well off, of good family, and under no one's authority ; so that it might, waiving the fault, turn out a good thing."

There was more friendliness than refinement about this production, but it was at all events useful, and Avice had omitted some of its vulgarities, for the sake of her correspondent, but none of its good sense ; and it was a comfort to Mrs. Sylverton to receive it. The only news of Agnes was, that she had had a slight feverish attack, which would delay their return to London a little.

CHAPTER IX.

Turandot.

Und kannst Du den Krystall mir nennen?
Ihm gleicht an Werth kein Edelstein;
Er leuchtet ohne je zu brennen,
Das ganze Weltall saugt er ein.
Der Himmel selbst ist abgemalet
In seinem wundervollen Ring;
Und doch ist, was er von sich strahlet,
Oft schöner als was er empfing!

Schiller.

THE day on which Lord Alfred was to return to Dover arrived.

Absence had endeared Roma to him, and palliated his sense of a want in her company. His return renewed her affection, and she forgave him for having left her.

The first evening passed off gloriously. Lord Alfred touched upon all the news so lightly and readily, and told them of more *ondits* than they could recollect.

"It is certainly a great charm in London," said he "having the enjoyment of so many eyes, ears, and tongues, while only taking care of one's own!"

Avice laughed at his way of putting the case, but she agreed in enjoying the multiplicity of life in London—the activity of mind it induces, and demands.

"And what must Paris then be?" said Roma.

"Paris! ah! you would like to see Paris, Roma? Well, if you get strong —; but," said he, changing his tone, "first you must see England well—we will keep Paris to talk about till then, and we need not stop short at Paris—what would you say to a tour in the Mediterranean next winter?"

Roma smiled, she had imperceptibly frowned on hearing Paris so easily disposed of.

"Why not begin there?" suggested Avice,
"and end with Paris?"

And thus did they devise a very pretty tour.
"L'homme propose—Dieu dispose."

The next day the two friends were driving, and Roma expressing her pleasure in "Alfred's" return, when they met a party riding. One lady and several gentlemen, and another lady far behind—her horse, a pretty Arab, started as they drew near, and her companion, a young man of about thirty, who had been deeply engaged in conversation, leapt down, seized her bridle, and turned her horse's head away, holding him till the carriage had passed, while his own face and figure were almost completely concealed by the body of his own steed, whose bridle was round his arm. They afterwards saw the same party again, but their carriage was then standing still, and the horses all seemed quite composed in their nerves.

As they rode leisurely by, Avice saw that the cavalier was no longer with them, and that the lady on the Arab was "Sofonisba's self!"

They bowed, and she rode up to the carriage, at a sign from Roma, who requested her to dine with them that evening, and sleep also at her house.

"Lord Alfred is come," said she, "and you will like him, and he will be so delighted to see you."

Sofonisba bowed, and smiled, and accepted, and rode on.

The evening came, like other evenings after sunset, and before moonlight.

After the labour of life, and before the enchantments of darkness.

Before the enchantments of darkness ?

It is unhappily true that we often beckon to our misfortunes, and hasten their footsteps.

By anticipation ? Not only by anticipation, but often most innocently by our little plans of pleasure for ourselves. Nay, often by our plans of pleasure for others.

Does this seem hard ? It seems to me "No," *Mir Scheint*, that we are not to do more than

accept, enjoy, make lessons of our life and its events.

When we try to create, we fail.

But poor Roma only thought of enjoying the opportunity of bringing amusement to Lord Alfred, for since she had found out that it was possible they could be dull together, from the want of very ardent affection on her side, and very steady ardour on his, (though she did not analyse it thus;) she had been very much afraid of his finding it out also, and she was very far, indeed, from being so indifferent to his presence, as to be contented under the idea of his seeking amusement elsewhere, or being bored with her. Roma had sense enough to know, that their mutual degree of interest and occupation in each other, was waning so as to promise but little future real happiness.

Avice was painfully aware of this also. And she did not see as yet in Roma that determination to be interested, and to interest, that springs from a higher source than the desire of pleasing,

or the dread lest others should do so more effectually.

And when the evening came, and Sofonisba arrived, another suspicion of Avice's was confirmed. She was introduced to Lord Alfred most demurely, but a slight arching of his eyebrows convinced Avice, that she had not been wrong in fancying him to be the assiduous guardian of the pretty frightened Arab and his rider, when the carriage stopped.

Roma was delighted with the readiness of Lord Alfred to make acquaintance, and when dinner was announced, she took Advice's hand and detained her, so that the other two were left to go down together.

In a *partie carrée*, the seats are not very important, as the conversation must be general. After dinner it turned upon Paris again, and the continent, &c., and in every subject started Sofonisba was quite at home.

Lord Alfred enjoyed her imperfect English, and was childishly amused with it. She, on the other hand, was as pleased to divert him, and

told him that to hear her sing an English ballad would be the finest specimen. The boldness of the proposition rather startled him, but he requested her to try, and she immediately went to the pianoforte and in the richest tones sung several ; at last he requested her to let him hear “Auld Robin Gray,” and forgot to laugh at her English (or Scotch) in the lively admiration he felt for her impassioned floods of song.

Avice and Roma felt that impassioned singing, was hardly suited to the subdued and swelling beauty of such a song as that, whose great charm consists in the union of deep feeling with perfect resignation.

But Lord Alfred and Sofonisba were delighted. When he joined the breakfast party next morning, he saw upon the table a little sketch which instantly attracted his attention. He took it up and recognised the sweet face of Avice. It was a sketch of her in crayons, done by Sofonisba, and certainly in good style and very like. He expressed a desire to have one of Roma, and the sitting lasted till twelve

o'clock when Sofonisba was called for. Her sketch of Roma was not quite done, but Roma begged her to come again in a few days to finish it.

But in the meantime, Avice heard from her mother that she wished her to do as she liked about prolonging Mademoiselle's holiday, and going herself to Richmond or staying with Roma as best might suit, adding the self-evident proposition that Fanny would do no lessons while yachting, nor while staying at Hervie's pretty little house—at least until Hubert should be gone to school; and that therefore whether Eurilia considered herself as her governess or not, she might please herself, and Avice, as to their stay at Dover.

Avice therefore thought it best on every account to leave Roma, and arranged to do so on the following Wednesday, nearly three weeks from her first arrival. Charamille was charmed to receive her and Mademoiselle Eurilia, she wrote to beg the latter would remain with her as long as Avice did. Eurilia however declined

this invitation, and said she would return to town.

Avice was glad to take her away from Dover. She was sorry for and unhappy about Roma. There was no stability about Lord Alfred's character; not only irresolute on great occasions, but inconstant in everything. Not two knights, but one, might call his shield gold or silver. Often would one determine that he was a most selfish person, when five minutes afterwards about something else he would act lavishly, or with great self-denial. You could never know where to find him, as the saying is. When he proposed anything, no one knew whether to say yes, or no. When he said yes, or no, one never could safely either trust to its remaining yes, or no, nor yet to its certainly veering round, as in some capricious characters. There was not even rule in his unruliness.

Her own position at Dover had been an unhappy one. She could not warn Roma, for there was nothing to warn her against. Even that first meeting of Sofonisba's with Lord

Alfred was entirely and purely accidental. He had gone down the cliffs, and missed his way up again. His tethered horse attracted the attention of the riding party, and upon a little speculating, as to whether an accident had occurred, one of them dismounted, looked about down the cliff, and descrying him, showed him the path he had lost.

They were about to ride into Dover, and he was going the other way; but one of the party, a dark-eyed foreigner, rode gently towards him, and asked if he knew his way perfectly? He owned he did not, and said that he had never ridden that way before. They gave him directions, but he found it difficult to understand them, and it ended by his turning to ride with them.

The foreign lady soon engrossed him entirely: she discovered who he was, and she told him Lady Alfred had been so kind to her.

"See, here she is!" she exclaimed.

A sudden movement of her horse obliged

him, as we have seen, to hold it, for, accidental as the meeting had been, he knew he ought not to be met thus.

All this he had told Avice. Roma never knew of that ride, but even she began to wish that Alfred would be as "nice when they were alone, as he had been while Avice was there, and Sofonisba came so often."

The day before Avice's departure, Lord Alfred finding her alone in the drawing-room, began to speak of Roma, and ask Avice how she thought she was.

Avice could not deny that she thought her very delicate, and Lord Alfred recurred to his plan of taking her abroad. Avice warmly seconded the idea; she dared not tell him to love her steadfastly, since nothing annoys the inconstant more than to imagine themselves complained of, and that Roma complained would instantly have occurred to him. By awakening his anxiety for her really delicate health, could she alone attempt to bind him

closer to her. She was right: he shuddered as he said :

“ Her mother was delicate, and she is very like her, I am told.”

Avice saw the tremor, and was silent.

He went on to speak of Sofonisba and her talents; he spoke very eagerly, and asked Avice to confirm all he had said, which she readily did.

“ But,” said he, quietly, “ you don’t like her: you care much more for many other people.”

“ For Roma ? ” answered Avice, smiling. “ Yes, indeed, I do. Roma is all truth, and nature, and loveliness. I must indeed be a strange being if I did not

“ Set her as a thing apart
In the deepest of my heart.”

But I can admire beauty and talent in others also; and I think that it is very right and pleasant to admire all that is good, true, and beau-

tiful in all persons, and in all things ; and yet to reserve special affection for those most congenial to us, or for those whom heaven has entrusted to our love and care. Of course admiration can never do in the place of such claims as these."

He looked at her gravely for a moment.

" I do not think, Lady Avice that such are ordinary principles—they that hold such are perhaps superior to the wilder and more impetuous feelings ; in fact, have more imagination than feeling.

Avice coloured slowly as she replied,

" It seems to me, the difference between your beautiful and docile horse, and the untamed animal of the plain—but I can understand your thinking that deficient feeling might take this appearance of moderation and self-government.

He laughed and replied,

" Ah ! you get to the moralizing, and there you are beyond me. Men feel—women only think," said he bitterly, as he left her to address Mademoiselle Eurilia, who entered to claim

Avice, and having caught his last words, replied :

“ *Allons donc*, Lord Alfred, that is a little unkind, and not too true, I am sure.”

A little lively *plaisanterie* followed, but Avice was occupied in saying farewell to Roma, and urging her with affectionate earnestness to be always occupied and interested ;

“ For,” she said, “ your health will be the better for it, and your powers of conversing the more varied,” murmured she in Roma’s ear.

“ Ah !” returned Roma, “ they used to be all-sufficient.”

“ And they will be so, with courage, Roma dear ; he loves you so much, you must not indeed fear.”

Not fear !—Fear hath indeed torment—no one would put fear for love voluntarily, but where it once is, you may say to the waves “ Peace,” if you can say to the loving but fearful heart, Fear not ! And Roma had learned to fear.

CHAPTER X.

“ Curved is the line of Beauty,
Straight is the line of Duty ;
Walk by the last, and thou shall see
The other ever followeth thee !”

“ And the mother gave in tears and pain,
The flowers she most did love ;
She knew she should meet them all again,
In the fields of light above.”

LONGFELLOW.

AVICE, too, had learned to fear.
To fear giving no pleasure as a companion to
those she loved best.

Early in life she had been one of a large
number, and peculiarly sensitive to noise and
bustle.

Silent, therefore, and often displeased, and jarred upon herself by the rough good-fellowship around her, she mentally resolved not to annoy others.

Often in this fear was she apparently dull when her thoughts were busy with amusing thoughts, which she did not think worth producing, or could not in the humour and frolic all around her. After a time her home became quiet enough.

Measles and hooping-cough had decimated schools and families, and her family had not escaped. Within a week two beautiful boys died ; a younger one lingered a little, but soon followed.

Avice herself suffered severely. In the long hours of her recovery she wept bitterly. She wept over her beautiful brothers, Heatherfell, Stephen, and Willie—poor little Willie ! Hubert was about a year old ; he had escaped altogether. They never could call him “Heatherfell” for a very long time.

But she wept more bitterly because she had

often been impatient of their noisy mirth,—that mirth with which the lonely house never more could ring. She felt as if it were a judgment upon her. Some years afterwards she heard a young girl say, “We are too many for such a plan ; we are almost too many.”

Avice scarcely knew her, but she exclaimed, seizing her hand :

“ Oh, do not say that !”

“ Why ?” exclaimed the girl astonished.

“ You may be few some day, too few ; and you will grieve bitterly then, ever to have thought you were too many.”

Avice’s voice faltered, and the young Lucy turned away pityingly ; she saw that some cruel memories were at work ; and when they parted she pressed Avice’s hand and said :

“ Thank you,” in a low, grateful voice, heard only by her she addressed.

By degrees Lady Keffsdale’s nursery was re-peopled ; but Avice could never regain her companions ; and the frequent question, “ Have you any sister near your own age, or a brother ?” was answered generally by a sigh.

The depression of her father had first made her resolve to take courage and try to amuse him. To her delight, she found he enjoyed her conversation. Always until now, she had felt as if she could talk easily to any one but him. It struck her the feeling was wrong, and that increased it. It struck her that perhaps it was needless, and she resolved to try.

She began by speaking cheerfully when she brought his tea, or newspaper, or letters. The tears they had shed together were still in his memory, and he felt as if she had suddenly become a thinking, feeling creature—no longer a mere child. He received her brightening manner, therefore, with a change in his own, and treated her as a companion worthy of attention.

Charamille Seymour received Avice with every possible symptom by which friendship and congeniality of mind can give welcome. And Avice found with her Dora and Jessie, who had been left with her while their mother went down to the Macbraes to see Agnes, who continued so completely overcome by the shame

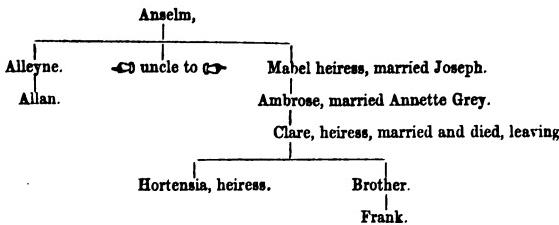
and sorrow of her sister's elopement, that she could not be moved yet. The half-brother Allan, also called this evening to see them, and hear the latest news of Marion. He had been very much shocked, for he had been actually the first person to discover what had occurred. His inquiries as to the state in which he found the little store of books when he came home that evening, had elicited old Kitty's half-told tale ; and with the elective conviction that all was not right, he lost no time in his researches, but in vain, as we know, till after the lapse of a few days, when the story appeared in the paper. He was furious with Hervie Ashill, whom, in his youthful impetuosity, he imagined to be the person ; not because he knew him well, we may be sure, but because he knew that he lived in Belgrave Square, and because he did not know of Ross-Leslie's acquaintance with Marion.

But he had now much to attend to on his own account.

His father, he knew, had belonged to a very good family, and had been heir to a very considerable fortune, that is, apparently the heir.

The actual possessor was an uncle.

The uncle was a staunch Roman Catholic, and because the young man's conscience would not allow him to forsake his mother's church (though educated in his father's, of course being a son), he gave his property to a niece, who was of his own faith. And she married and had one son, who also married, and left in the world Clare, mother of Hortensia and her brother, thus :—



All the survivors were now Protestants ; but in the Roman Catholic branch, the generations going by heiresses, were so much more rapid in the one case than in the other, that Allan and Frank were nearly of an age, it being well known that twenty years is quite enough time to reckon between mother and daughter : while between father and son thirty-five or forty will not be too much in most cases. And the

heiresses in this case married exceedingly early : not so Hortensia. She was perfectly aware that her relations of the other branch were connected by marriage with Mrs. Sylverton's family ; but the fact of the second marriage of that lady had escaped her memory ; nor did she know that Allan lived ; nor did she, on receiving Agnes, ever connect her in her mind with that branch of her own people.

When she married, Frank, poor fellow, seeing his prospects clouded, and his fair inheritance rendered rather dubious, had intended to stick fast to his profession. But his health failed ; he was obliged to quit the army.

His father would have kept him at home, but this he would not hear of.

He laboriously undertook to read law, and in the meantime to do anything he could find by way of literary employment. And he became acquainted with the same publisher who employed Allan.

A friendship sprung up between the two young men, a friendship neither wholly beneficial nor entirely hurtful.

Frank was so alone in the world. Allan so full of cares for his family.

The contrast was striking, and they relieved each other's peculiar *soucis*.

Allan was a little reserved about his mother's affairs, but open upon all his own. Frank excessively confiding.

They met as Allan was inquiring for traces of the fugitives.

"Good heavens ! Allan, what ails you ?"

He told him his fears. Frank turned pale as death.

"Now God forbid !" he exclaimed.

He could by no means relinquish the search, and Allan's fervent "God bless you, Frank," when at last they parted, with a wringing of the hand, and a shake of the head for the night, thrilled to his heart.

His kindness that day, and the succeeding days bound them more closely together.

In speaking of the sad event, Allan reminded him that Ross-Leslie was a friend of Colonel Macbrae's, and showed Frank the lodging he had occupied.

“ Colonel Macbrae ! Has he been in town lately ?”

“ Yes ; do you know him ?”

“ Well,” said Frank, “ I saw him married ; he saved my life ; I was in his regiment, but he has made me poor !”

“ How, Frank, how ?”

“ By marrying my aunt. She was a maiden lady, doomed by her friends to remain so ; but in her gratitude to Colonel Macbrae for having saved my life, she made me a beggar by marrying him.”

Frank laughed, and so did Allan ; the picture was a strange one.

But Allan pondered deeply, nevertheless.

“ What was your aunt’s maiden name ?”

“ Why, mine to be sure ! Allan, are you mad ?”

“ No ; but I meant your great-grandmother’s ?”

“ Annette Grey. But she was not the heiress. I believe you mean my great great-grandmother after all, Mabel Graeme.”

“ Mabel Graeme ! niece to Ambrose Graeme, and his heiress.”

"Yes," replied Frank quietly, "and what then?"

"Don't you see? We are relations; my father and your great great-grandmother both descended from Ambrose Graeme."

"I see, I see; and yet you are not right. It is not descent from him, but from his father, Anselm; your grandfather, and my great-great-grandfather. But how curious that we should be connections and never have made it out till now!"

"Curious indeed, Frank," rejoined Allan; "just when you will be ashamed of us," he added mournfully.

Frank assured him that he was wrong; that Ross-Leslie was a good fellow, independent, and of good family. It might have been much worse.

Allan did not doubt this; but coarse and wanting in taste as his outward man too often was, his mind was far more scrupulous than is often the case; and under his "loud" waist-coats and dirty riding-coats beat a heart true and loyal, honourable and refined. He could not take comfort on Marion's account from

any reassurances as to Ross-Leslie's station or means. It was the disgrace that he felt ; and though it was now some ten days since the event, and people were beginning to let it drop, as a nine days' wonder in London always does, (if even it survive until then), he felt now more generally ashamed of Marion and of Ross-Leslie. Nothing had been heard of them yet ; but ere long Ross-Leslie exchanged into a regiment going to Canada, and they wrote their farewells to their friends.

His coming to Charamille's was a pleasant circumstance, as it prevented Avice from feeling Mademoiselle Eurilia *de trop*. She, in full flow of spirits, laughed, sang, and talked with every one. Allan knew but little of Avice, yet he could not resist telling her some of his affairs, and particularly his intimacy with, and affinity to, Frank, whom she had formerly known well. He shrunk from speaking of Marion to any one but Dora, with whom he held an eager colloquy for a few minutes, while Avice drawing to her the little Jessie, fondled and caressed her with mournful tenderness, and thought of

her own sweet Amy. Charamille meanwhile, was speaking Italian with Mademoiselle Eurilia, and descanting upon the merits of the Italian version of the Psalms, asking her if she knew them in English well enough to judge of that translation; and their conversation glided off to natural scenery, and thence to foreign towns, in all of which both ladies gave sufficient evidence of having seen Europe comfortably well, though the one mentioned everything that could give her effect—as for effect, and the other spoke naturally, and as if it were her daily habit to—

“ Go forth in spirit and review,
The classic scenes that Virgil drew.”

But I am keeping you too long, my fair reader, and you are already wondering where all this long skein will find an end, and be “pirned” off neatly. I have warned you it is not a regular novel, and must remind you that I do not consider myself bound to transmute *Was Mir Scheint*, that which appears to me into current coin, if it be not real metal.

I cannot make it *was Sie wollen* “what you please:” but I tell you simply things as I have known them to be, or as they might well be.

I dare say you think I have brought too many people before you, and that Lady Avice is not nearly enough my heroine.

In real-life, events and circumstances do not always eddy conspicuously round one individual, I observe. And though each heart has a history, and each history a beginning, a zenith, and a sunset, yet very many form parts of each other, and we each work out our own, while more or less entangled or interested in observing those of others. Sometimes, indeed, we seem to sit with our own destiny in our laps, the thread scarcely twisted, upon a sunny hill, whence we can trace the operations, and the breakings, and the joinings of the many-coloured woof spun for others.

Avice, when she retired to her room, felt a little thus, on this very evening.

Marion, Roma, Hervie, Ethelred, May, Mademoiselle Eurilia, Agnes, the Macbraes, Lord Alfred.—In the histories of all these besides

her own people, was she in some degree intimately concerned. She thought sorrowfully of the foolish little Marion ; tenderly of Roma ; kindly of Hervie. She had, in short, kindly interest in each and all. She entered into the sorrows and dangers, the pleasures and joys of each and of their *circumambient atmospheres*, also.

Just now no one wanted her.

She might turn, and meditate upon her own bitter trial.

She might use the opportunity of soothing herself by prayer.

Hitherto she had not met Ethelred and May, but she felt that it must come.

She could not feel angry with poor innocent May ; but she feared the young creature would spend a joyless life.

She felt sure that Ethelred might make any one that could value him, happy.

Could May appreciate him ?

She did not know ; she always stopped at this question, and prayed that she might, and that the very dews of heaven might fall upon them both, and bless them beyond expression.

CHAPTER XI.

"A frequent similar effect argueth a constant cause ;
Yet who hath counted the links that bind an omen
to its issue ?
Who hath expounded the law that rendereth calamities gregarious,
Pressing down with yet more woes the heavy-laden
mourner ?
The soul hath its feelers, cobwebs floating on the wind.
That catch events in their approach with sure and
apt presentiment ;
So that some halo of attraction heraldeth the coming
friend."

PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY.

THE next few days passed pleasantly enough to Avice. She heard of her parents ; Lord Keffsdale was still a little indisposed, but seemed

to enjoy the sea, and so did Fanny and her brothers. They proposed to cruise about some little time longer, and perhaps even to touch for fresh stores and go off on a more distant course.

Meanwhile, Avice might divide her time as she pleased, going to Hervie's house whenever she liked to do so. This, however, she would not do, as she felt how likely it was that he would return suddenly. Her letter was forwarded from Dover, with a few words from Roma, evidently written in doubtful spirits.

Charamille, meantime, was very happy ; she had known about poor little Amy's death, and Avice's sorrow, and it did her heart good to have her beloved Avice with her. These two very superior women were a very great encou-
mion upon deep and enlightened friendship. The intimacy of Charamille had been very beneficial to Avice. There was something so puri-
fied and exalted about Charamille, so at rest upon earthly subjects for herself, so content to look for, and find, manna for her everywhere ; and yet so ready to seek quails for others. So intensely interested in life for those who were

beginning it, enduring it, enjoying it, or closing it, so free from its mud, so alive to its blue sky, so keenly alive to nature, so skilled a judge of art, so simple for herself, so luxurious for her friends, able to find music and poetry everywhere for herself, but able to select the most rare and delicious enjoyments of them, for others.

To spend a week with Charamille, to hear her discourse gently, or eagerly, lovingly, or amusingly, to read with her, to unfold her opinions, to creep into her heart, to worship with her, to follow her voice in thanksgiving, to be one with her in her walks, her charities, her daily life, was to Avice, and had long been, a most golden opportunity of seeing how earth's angels kiss earth, and live to heaven ; to nurse her, too, when suffering, as she too often was ; to be her deputy at such times to those who missed her gentle voice in reading to them, her eye of interest in listening to them, her sweet words of comfort, sympathy, or loving counsel ; this was another deep joy. To watch her training of the children was another ; to observe her deep humility and patience, her self-denial and liberality,

and not to let her see, for it would grieve her, the intense admiration all these things excited. And then to confide trouble to her pitying ear. But Avice could not even to her, tell her story.

Her mother did not know it, and she felt it impossible to tell Charamille first. One day the latter observed her depression, and pressed her hard, looking into her eyes with a gaze that asked for confidence. A groan burst from Avice's lips.

"Oh, Charamille," she cried, "do not, I entreat you, tempt me so. There are depths in every one's capacity for suffering that he must not avow. Pray for me. Let your fervent prayers pray for me, that I may hold on and be steadfast unto death; but ask me nothing with your wonderful speaking eyes, or I must tell you."

They were in the garden, and Avice sunk down upon the ground exhausted. At this moment Allan arrived, and hurriedly advancing to them, said :

"Have you heard poor young Ashill is dead !

killed on a Belgian railway by the train getting off the line."

"Hush!" said Charamille; "Avice is here; she cannot bear sudden news yet."

He did not hear the end of the sentence, for he discovered Avice, and thinking her faintness had been caused by his tale, he bitterly reproached himself, and called for assistance. Charamille begged him to be quiet, and to fetch her salts, and some water from the house. She meanwhile used the restoratives of speaking to her, laying her flat upon the ground, and rubbing her hands. Seeing her open her eyes, she went to fetch a little eau-de-cologne bottle which Avice had worn on her châtelaine, and which now glittered on the glass a little beyond where they were. Allan returning just as Avice began to say, "Where am I?—what is it?" hastened to reply:

"Do not fear, your secret is safe with us," to which judicious speech he was prompted by the excited state of his own feelings, and not at all by a right reading of Avice's case, for she had not even heard his news. The colour tinged

her cheek as she caught the sounds, and she replied :

“ What secret ! I have no secret. What do you mean ? ”

“ He means nothing. He was frightened at seeing a form on the grass,” interrupted Charamille ; “ he came in just after you fainted, and I was glad to have his help for you.”

Avice only partially re-assured ; Allan quite mystified ; both however felt that the subject needed not to be pursued just then, and he had just enough tact to take leave almost directly, after saying that he would take any message to Mademoiselle Eurilia, as he saw her pretty often : she was staying in Eaton Square.

Charamille, by way of saying something, asked him whether he had heard of Agnes, and whether he had written to his new-found relation, Mrs. Macbrae.

He replied that Agnes was better, and that his mother had unfolded the intelligence to Hortensia, who had taken it very good-humouredly and had invited him to go and visit her before his mother and Agnes went, which he intended to do.

It is a little forestalling events, and yet, I think it is as well to say, that when he did pay that visit, he had to announce his very brilliant prospects as the affianced husband of the great Sicilian heiress Sofonisba di Castel-Eurilia, that she was also invited to visit the Macbraes, and that with most marvellous rapidity Hortensia became as enchanted with her as Allan himself had been ; and as she had done without a chaperon in Eaton Square while receiving his visits, so also did she manifest no intention of waiting for her Sicilian relatives to appear upon the summons (which she avowed she had sent to them all). Hortensia made a little gift to Allan for the wedding tour, and insisted upon the marriage taking place there. Accordingly, “at Glenferns, in the old Roman Catholic Chapel, and at the parish church,” did the respective ministers “unite Allan Graeme, nephew of the late and cousin of the present proprietors of Glenferns, and Sofonisba di Castel-Eurilia, niece of the Duca di Castel-Eurilia, of Palermo.”

Upon inquiry, however, her history was dis-

covered to be very unlike her pretensions ; she was a Greek lady, more notorious in France than renowned, of no traceable parentage. Allan was married, however, and it is but justice to say that she made him a good and faithful wife; and that his relations never ceased to behave to her exactly as if they had not received her sailing under false colours.

My readers will readily imagine, that she herself had never had any intention of returning, to exist upon verbs and practising with Fanny, and therefore will be less surprised than Avice was, a few days after the visit of Allan, to hear from her, that finding it necessary to remain in London for the present, and having other prospects for the future, she should consider herself as disengaged ; but that for a week or two longer she might avail herself of their house in Eaton Square, and if Lady Avice should require anything of her, would be most happy to be of use to her.

Lady Avice, however, upon hearing more of "her prospects," did not apply to her for fear of being troublesome.

Charamille broke slowly to her the fact, that Allan had reported. Avice totally disbelieved it; but it gave her an anxious feeling about him, and she quite expected to hear something of him, day by day.

Do any of us feel exempt from this little superstition, which is so often borne out by facts, *i. e.*, that a report about a person, however false, is generally followed by a real event, though totally unconnected with the report?

But in every-day life we pass men, women, and children every day—trees, houses, and scenes every hour, without observing them particularly. Something one day arrests our attention, and attracts it, to the little-regarded object. And for some time afterwards we have this object brought before us by a variety of causes continually.

There was a page in a history I knew like this :

A rich family lived near a village. In the village lived a poor family. It was unknown to the rich family, and there were so many that this was not surprising.

One day a boy cried in church. He was a most ordinary-looking child, not in any way remarkable.

The young ladies had never seen him before; but from this day they met him constantly for awhile.

At length they heard that there was great distress in the poor family.

A child, and its father, dying of typhus fever.

They sent relief and called to see them, and found three other little children and their mother starving.

The two invalids were dead.

As they went home, they saw afar off two policemen collar a boy.

The next day when they went to the cottage the mother was weeping over a new trouble. Her son had been seized as a poacher.

A beautiful partridge and her covey rose before him, as he wandered through the cottagers' gardens.

He threw a stick—hit two birds—they fell. He picked them up, and knowing nothing of game laws forgot that they must be the pro-

perty of Mr. Tweeney, whose park bordered the gardens.

He had been seen—was followed, and secured. Great interest was made for him ; his distress, his ignorance pleaded, his youth—but in vain—he must take his trial.

He was allowed to bid his mother farewell. He came in while the sisters were there. It was the boy. They made great efforts for him, and persuaded their father to do so.

The boy must await the assizes, but they were at hand.

He was fined, and reprimanded only.

The fine was paid, the boy returned to his home.

He found good friends had been there. These good friends put him to a good school, and never ceased to care for his prosperity.

One night their pretty little maid blushed, fidgetted, and owned by degrees, the cause. She wanted to be married.

To whom ?

“ To a painter, a very good trade, and he is in excellent business at M——.”

It was the boy.

Grown up, apprenticed, and married from the house that had so long ignored his existence.

You will say this is not a case in point; but I think it is. *Mir scheint so.*

These things are opportunities to do good. The opportunity was in this case well seized. It is then a lesson upon opportunity.

Avice was right; Hervie was not dead. He had been slightly hurt, indeed, in the accident, but he had been able to return to England, and was at Dover very soon after Allan reported his death. His arm in a sling, he walked about Dover very comfortably.

Yes, very comfortably, till he saw a carriage, and in that carriage the little lovely Roma. Day after day he met her, and painful as was the pang it gave him, sad as he felt to watch the blue transparent delicacy of her brow and little hand, he could not help looking.

Roma saw him at length, and bowed. A sudden pain shot through her as she did so, and a feeling of strong depression came upon her.

He visited her once—twice ; Lord Alfred was present each time.

Roma began to feel more wretched than ever. He distressed her by no tone of peculiar interest ; he was quiet to a degree, and very true was it, that Roma did not know how he had loved her.

He saw, however, that she was not happy, and she saw that he saw it ; but she did not know yet her own capability of having loved him once.

At length, something reminded her of the pleasure she had felt at a party, where he was, and how dull at the next, where he was not. One by one, many things recurred to her mind, and with a strong and bitter cry, did she pray that her heart might be turned, only to look upon Alfred.

She reminded Alfred of his promise of going abroad..

He replied, that he must go to London first. She entreated him with tears not to leave her, at all events not at Dover, she was so tired of it.

"How unreasonable!" cried he; "just when I want to go, and when Hervie Ashill is here."

"As if I should see any one while you were away!" replied she, boldly; and then coming close to him, re-assuming her old way with him, she held up her hand, and pointed to France, saying:

"If you must leave me—there—but why should you? Am I not your wife? May I not say, 'Where thou goest, I will go.' Oh, dear Alfred, do not leave me; before that sun is quite gone, say a kind and welcome yes!"

Her hand, still pointing over the sea, but towards the setting sun, was shone through literally by the level rays. Alfred observed it, noticed its beauty and its delicacy. Roma acted wisely in choosing, if she chose, this position, for the same sun gave a look of beautifully intense entreaty to her eyes, and Alfred thought her exquisitely lovely, and very, very much too, transparently so.

He sighed sadly, and smiled lovingly upon

her, and promised to take her forthwith to France, and try to arrange his business by writing. She thanked him earnestly for his "great kindness, in yielding to her fancies, while you have me still!" she murmured. Alfred started at this echo to his own thoughts.

He was not very apt to take fright in other ways, or he might have suspected Roma of some hidden motive for wishing to quit Dover; but had he questioned her, she could, with "holy front serene," have replied, that she wished to be truly his good and faithful wife, and as such, to be his companion.

She was so thankful now, to have gained her point; but do not mistake her. She was only afraid of being unfaithful in heart, and of this she was terribly afraid.

She wrote to Avice the next morning, and told her that Alfred had so kindly promised to take her to France directly. She also mentioned Hervie's being there, and Avice did not know how shocked she had been, by his reported death, till she heard that he was alive, and not

suffering. Charamille saw this, and drew her inferences.

Among the things that astonish common minds, nothing is more astonishing than the fact, that many girls, rich in beauty and intelligence, popular, rather rich, and very pleasant, never marry.

They, however, always suppose that there is “a disappointment” in the case, and regret that while so many empty-hearted wives and mothers may be found, these well-endowed companions fall to no man’s share, and they forget how well-fitted they are to belong to themselves, and to suffice to their own entertainment and enjoyment.

Charamille did not do this. She was in no hurry to see Avice married. She was able to rest so confidently, upon the certainty of her friend’s being sufficient to herself, and invaluable to others, whatever were her fate; that she did not “worry” either herself, or Avice, about the apparently long delay, and the total silence of Avice, upon such subjects, as regarded herself.

Avice had never had courage to revisit the scene of her marriage, near, as we may recollect, to her present abode. She had been with Charamille several days—ten or twelve, perhaps—when the latter proposed, that as it was a half-holiday, she and Avice, and little Jessie, should drive, while Dora and the rest might walk with Mrs. Lakine, Charamille's old servant.

Charamille took the reins, and joyfully arranging little Jessie's low seat between them, asked Avice if she cared where they drove, and off they went. Avice replied in the negative, and Charamille turned down a very pretty lane, skirting the woods of the Sylverton's place. Avice recognised the line they were taking too well. Her friend asked her if she would mind visiting an old friend of her's, who lived near this spot.

"He is an excellent man," she added, "and I often see him; but I asked you if you would mind, on account of his poor wife, who is in a sad state, and always in the room with him; he is devoted to her, and it is very distressing, for she often does not know him."

Avice made no objection, and they drove up to a neat house, small and low, but very pretty, and making Blond-Cendré stand still till the servant came to take the reins, they alighted, on hearing that Mr. Anderton was at home. They were shown into a room, where sat the noble old-looking man, and his poor invalid wife. She took no notice of them, and seemed to be unconscious of their arrival.

Mr. Anderton received them courteously, and conversed very pleasantly with them. He told them that he had just had an offer of a better living ; a church, or rather a district church, in London. He had many friends in London, and much to enjoy there.

“ But,” said he, “ my heart clings to that ivy-covered church, and its little white spire.”

He directed their attention towards the window, that looked out upon such a pretty church ! Charamille knew it well, though it was not the one she attended, and Avice, who had instantly recognized Mr. Anderton, wandered to the window to hide the tears that swelled in her eyes, as she looked upon

the church—the very church where her real history had begun.

He observed her movement, and asked her if he was not right to be fond of such a pretty old church.

Avice turned round to answer him, her face still agitated, and a sudden thought seemed to strike him, but knowing, probably, that a lady married in private does not wish to have the news recalled to her, or perhaps not exactly himself, recollecting the whole circumstances, he made no remark ; and it was well for the whole party, that the poor invalid began muttering and talking as she did sometimes. Little Jessie was near her, and she looked at her earnestly, and murmured :

“ No, no—not mine, not mine. Mine cannot come back. She is dead—I saw her—broken to pieces—broken to pieces—” she continued, as of a piece of porcelain. “ *He* did not see her—I was alone—alone, alone—alone ! quite, quite alone ! — for ever, and ever, and ever ! She is gone ! she is gone ! gone !”

Poor Jessie looked dreadfully alarmed, as the poor invalid crooned out these fragments of her sad story, and the others were much affected. Tears were in Mr. Anderton's eyes, as he explained to them, the cause of her state of misery.

"My poor wife!" said he; "we had one little girl—she was our delight, our joy, an only one. When she was about nine years old, she began to walk in her sleep; and one evening she came into the drawing-room about eleven o'clock. My wife, in her alarm, scolded her more than was prudent, and awoke her suddenly. The next night, the poor child did not re-appear, she was in her bed when her mother retired: she thought all was safe. But in the morning early, the gardener found her insensible, and dreadfully mangled, lying upon the ground just beneath an open window at the top of the house. It was not here. They were staying at a friend's house; I was not with them. Since that time my poor wife has never been herself. It is seven years ago."

Avice was perfectly overcome.

Her own poor Amy's violent death, and this

sad history ! There was so much resemblance in the fate of the two young creatures ; she took the hand of the poor mother, and pressed it in her's with a true sympathy, while tears fell fast from her eyes. The mourner looked up at her, and spoke to her—

“ Who is this,” said she, “ that is sorry about my child, and also weeps with me ? One surely who has suffered too ! Only one who has suffered can weep such tears ! with me ! God bless you—God bless you. You have done my heart good.”

“ God comfort you,” said Avice, as she bent down and kissed her hand. The poor mother drew her closer, and kissed her cheek, murmuring “ Pray for me ;” and Avice, after returning the caress, was led away by Charamille, who dreaded the effect of the scene upon her. The poor old man meanwhile, had been answering her questions about his prospect of removal. He did not think it would hurt Mrs. Anderton, and he was himself by no means averse to a London church. He thanked Charamille for her services, which he maintained, though un-

successful at the time, had probably had some weight at last, as a request of her's might very possibly have with her brother-in-law, who was in office at this time.

Charamille expressed her pleasure at his success, but thought her request had not much to do with it. However, she would not reject his thanks, on Avice's account, for the momentary revival of his poor wife. He said, as they watched her speaking to Avice, that she had not "departed before from her lonely, wretched crooning, or total silence, ever since the terrible accident."

Avice heard this from Charamille, as they drove homewards, and she replied—

"Ah yes! because I had suffered a similar misfortune. She found that out by the quick senses that grief has sometimes. I could bear, I think, any suffering, if I were sure it would make me a better, more consoling, sympathising friend of all who are suffering. Welcome, indeed, would pain mental and bodily be, were one sure of this!"

"One is sure of it, Avice dear," said her friend

tenderly. "Nothing is wasted, we know, and the sad experience of sorrow is surely allowed to bring its attendant mercy—the gift of consolation and sympathy for others; while our own wounds ache, we learn to bind up the wounds of others. There is as much beauty and luxury born upon earth among thorns, as upon mossy banks. Are not the rose and the prickly pine-apple, better than the daisy and the strawberry? You have done a good work, to-day, Avice, which you could not have done had you not known terrible suffering, dearest!"

"But are there not some bitter sorrows, Charamille, tell me, are there not some which give dreadful pain, and yet are of use to none afterwards, in this way?"

"I know of none, Avice, that can befall one who is not an atheist, and be unfruitful, if we do not let them harden the heart. But what is the matter, Jessie, are you frightened?"

Jessie was indeed much frightened, and her pretty little face was crimson. They were about to ford a little stream, and a drove of cattle were coming the opposite way. Jessie was

too much used to Norton Street to be very fond of seeing noble white horns near her, she having a firm belief that oxen and cows were made and lived to toss everybody, and make hay of her in particular, whenever they met her. Blond-Cendré's nerves were a little excited, and when he heard the rushing of the water between the legs of the oxen, and their low bellowings also, he plunged into the stream in desperation, and found himself in the middle of both his foes—the water and the bullocks. This was too much for his courage, and he floundered, and kicked, and could by no means be brought to attempt to land. Avice raised her voice, and begged the man to drive his creatures faster, so that they might be all quickly out of Blond-Cendré's sight; but he seemed likely to kick the carriage to pieces first, and poor Jessie, trembling with fear, was no longer very safe on her little seat. Avice took her up beside her. Charamille's strength was failing—she could hardly keep on her hold much longer—her heart was beginning to palpitate, and she felt that if it increased to an attack, she could not hold in Blond-Cendré

at all. But she had soon the inexpressible relief of feeling that her companion knew this also. Avice, by neither word nor look expressed this idea, yet both knew that it had occurred to each, and presently Avice looked round for the servant—he was not there! She could not drive, yet it was evident Charamille was becoming quite unfit for the severe exertion she was now making.

Just at the right moment Avice took the reins, saying, “You must be tired,” in the calmest manner, and trying to hold them as her friend had done. Blond-Cendré kicked worse than before, as if he knew it was a strange hand, and the bullocks still surrounded them on all sides—nay, even a fresh drove appearing!”

Avice resolved on a bold manœuvre; she tried to turn him, he yielded, (with divers splashings, so that all were pretty wet). When he saw the bullocks on that side also, he was rather perplexed, but set off at a brisk pace.

Brava! brava! shouted voices near them, and a carriage which had been coming to their help, pulled up, and the occupants addressed

them. Charamille knew them, and she looked so ill that they offered her a place in their carriage ; she declined for herself, but asked them to take poor little Jessie, who was quite worn out with her fears. Her servant got down from their carriage, and told Charamille that he had been to get assistance, and having met this carriage, had come with it to them. In the meanwhile, Avice was not looking at the carriage, but she felt that some one's eyes were upon her, and raising her own, she met the glance of Ethelred Kent !

Beside him sat a very pretty young creature, and Avice concluded that it was May—his pretty simple May, and she looked at her with great interest.

When Charamille had finished speaking, and Avice might go on, she bowed with composure to Ethelred, and the parties moved forward. Avice, however, took the little seat behind, and made the servant drive, and so they reached home safely ; for Blond-Cendré did not fear the backs, so much as the armed fronts of his foes.

Charamille was very unwell for two days after this.

On the Monday following, Avice had a most piteous letter from Roma, saying that Alfred had changed his plans, and was gone to town, leaving her alone, notwithstanding her entreaties ; that he had been away five days, and said, he might be longer. She entreated Avice to pray for her, to come to her, she said, she was not fit to be alone.

But Avice had now no travelling companion. She quickly determined upon having one for the occasion ; but Charamille proposed to take a girl into the house herself, and let her trustworthy Bridget accompany Avice ; and this was agreed to. Avice paying Bridget as if her own maid, for the time. She left Charamille on the Wednesday, not sooner, because certain household cares demanded Bridget's eyes and hands, and Avice wished to give as little trouble of any kind as possible. She reached Dover late in the evening ; her room was ready, and she was told that Lady Alfred would not see her that night.

Avice, a little alarmed, insisted upon seeing her maid. She was not at home, and there was a degree of mystery, that she did not like, about all the household.

Her evident anxiety touched the housemaid, at length, and she confessed that her lady had written a letter to Lady Avice.

She produced it, it was as follows :

“ Dearest Avice,

“ I am gone to Calais, Alfred knows it—I told him I should, if he stayed away four days. You do not know what I have suffered since he left me. I would not leave the house, but all in vain. I am here with my maid and footman. I went to town on Monday ; Alfred had not long been at home. I conjured him most fervently to take me with him, and not to leave me here ; I went on my knees to him—I entreated—I prayed—I cried in fits of crying till I was quite ill ; but he said, he could not. I must wait for him here—I mean at Dover. That I might, if I liked, go to Calais ; but he advised me to wait. He was

kind, but not as I wished ; he did not see the reasonableness of my pressing fear and dread. I could not explain it, and I am here.

“ Everywhere your loving
“ ROMA.”

Avice was in despair. What could she do ? —what should she do ? She lay awake all night, in the first place, but could not determine what to do. At length she almost determined upon a plan—to follow Roma.

But, for this purpose she must have money. If she were obliged to stay with Roma, she must pay expenses in part.

Where could she get money ?

The feeling how dependent young women are in those respects, made her feel, also, how doubtful it might be that a young woman had any right to go upon such a chase.

But she remembered that she was married. She looked at the wedding-ring (upon which she had had a little shield placed, with her name in Old English, to hide the fact of its being a wedding-ring), which she never took off, and

she felt, that in the eyes of the world she was indeed only Avice, a young woman ; but in the eyes of Heaven, she was Avice, a wife. Still in the eyes of her parents she was only Avice, their daughter at home ; and she well knew how much liberty she already had, and how careful she should be not to offend.

Then again, all the friend in her nature woke up, and fired her with a strong desire to fly to poor Roma. The desire was so strong, it overthrew her reasonings, and she determined to go.

But how was she to find the means ?

Charamille ? it would inconvenience her.

Hervie Ashill ? impossible !

Ethelred ? worse still !

How then ; why did not this occur to her sooner ? In her mother's last letter she mentions, that in the event of their going further, Avice might want money, and that her father had written to his banker, to honour her drafts up to the amount of £100, and mentioned, moreover, one or two small tradesmen, whose claims, if made, had better be immediately

responded to, out of this sum. Avice drew £50, and had it cashed, wrote to her parents, to Charamille, to Lord Alfred—wondered at herself for having hitherto forgotten this obvious resource, and tried to fortify her mind for her undertaking. She prayed, with intense fervour.

Bridget came to tell her it was half past seven, and that a packet would sail, at eight o'clock. The half-disturbed packages, were soon arranged, and Avice and Bridget embarked.

CHAPTER XII.

“ Adelante amigos mios,
Honra ! fé y esperanza.
Adelante energia y amor.
Adelante y creencia !”

CONTRARY to all true romance, Avice met neither friend nor foe during her brief sojourn on board the vessel, and made her passage in every respect easily and satisfactorily,

Avice had one of those minds that deliberate and act, not act and deliberate.

Avice started on her friendship’s pilgrimage ; she was no prey to misgivings or doubts. She

enquired at the Custom-house, and at the best hotels in Calais, but in vain. At length, Bridget heard, at one of the less good hotels, that Lady Alfred had been there, but had left it almost immediately. Avice went herself to enquire, and traced out enough to determine her to go on to the next little town, whither she thought she must be gone, and she did so. Upon her enquiring there, at the hotel, she was told that a lady, who did not give her name, young and pretty, with waving hair and slight figure, was there, or rather had been an hour before—that she had ordered a carriage, and that she was gone—the gentleman riding by the carriage.

“The gentleman!”

Avice had never even thought for an instant of Roma’s being accompanied by any one but her maid; she had never supposed Hervie to be of the party!

No! her opinion of him, forbade her to believe it; she knew he would not do anything so likely to be injurious to Roma, as giving her his escort.

But might not Roma have met with some one going in the same direction ?

It was not very likely, but she resolved to try, and proceeded accordingly.

Ere long, the carriage she was in, gained upon one a little in advance of them.

She felt almost upon the verge of success—she could scarcely command her emotion—nearer and nearer her liberally paid postillion pressed upon their quarry, and the long hill that obliged the latter to go slowly, was mounted at a round trot by the former. The other carriage was descending the hill ; Avice's postboy, warm with the eagerness of pursuit, put his horses into a yet faster pace, cantered up to the carriage and desired it to "Stand !"

Mechanically it obeyed—the man behind shrieked "Robbers!"—the lady within fainted—the gentleman swore a terrible oath that no one should part him and his beloved !

In the confusion, Avice could not at first be heard, and could scarcely understand that she was supposed to be the person sent in pursuit. One glance at the fainting inhabitant of the car-

riage, had enabled her to perceive that it was not Roma, and all she now desired was to obtain news of her, and retrace her weary way.

At length the gentleman's rhetoric failed, and he became calm enough to perceive that Avice was not in pursuit of him at all; and he heard her gentle tones as she said :

“ Pardonnez-moi l'effroi que je vous ai causé. Je cherche une amie ; on m'a indiqué votre voiture comme probablement la sienne ; je l'ai poursuivie, sans vouloir vous déranger. Croyez-moi, je regrette beaucoup la peine et la frayeur, dont j'ai été la cause.”

And she offered salts to the unfortunate girl, who, very very young, appeared to be attempting a flight that she would probably regret. The gentleman answered her, that he had seen Roma, or rather Lady Alfred on board ; they had crossed the same day, he added that he knew no more, having been entirely occupied with the business of escorting “ma cousine” to Paris. Avice felt that “ma cousine” was meant to be “ma femme ;” but she did not feel it her duty to reason with him, or to interfere with his

affairs, and took her leave, returning whence she came.

Anxious and disappointed she paced the little garden of the inn. It was just that time in autumn, or rather in the ripeness of summer, when the seeds of the lime-tree crackle pleasantly under the foot of the idler in the shade, as he muses in his walk—no rustling of dry leaves drowned the sound of these little minute-guns.

Avice was not at leisure for more than active meditation, however, just now. She needed to re-arrange her thoughts, and to think steadily upon her own position.

It was not very cheering.

Her father and mother out cruizing, and she alone in France, running after a lost friend !

And Hervie Ashill !

She did not forget to be thankful for the one bright gleam of that gloomy day.

The quick refutation granted her, of any imputation upon him.

She was not in the least inclined to love him, but she had a strong faith in goodness, and in

individuals, and in the indications of it, anywhere, in all mankind.

A good or glorious action was to her always truly welcome. For its example, its results, and for the good it did her, and others, by raising the standard of their expectations, of their fellow-creatures.

Not that she thought human nature was striking out new powers; but because, with a humble and rejoicing Faith, she recognized in every such instance another shadow of resemblance to the Divine Original — another manifestation of His will to restore that image, if man will.

She perceived fragments of that image in every aspiring effort, after noble and generous action; after exalted, consistent character. She knew that, in fact, such were the flickerings of a fire within, kindled by no word, nor spell, of human power.

And in this manner had she more especially rejoiced in the sincere and consistent religion of Hervie Ashill, a young man rich, as he of large possessions, and with the independence so dearly

loved by youth, to allure him to self-indulgence ; with, however, the additional temptation of having neither brother nor sister with whom to interchange—and by the interchange to nourish and strengthen—the serious and holy thoughts that formed his usual meditations.

Yet, as we have seen, Hervie had not yet obtained mastery over his naturally impetuous circulation, and would for a moment flash up and fire forth as others. Alas ! “ What do ye more than others,” was too often applicable to him, and prevented his enjoying always the security from tempests, that the sure anchor of a right hope and faith gives.

Hervie’s indignation, was generally on the defensible side, of a generous impulse ; but he often grieved, as those only grieve who know their own heart’s plague, for the uncontrolled bursts of his too hasty fire, “ e’en on virtue’s side.”

Avice, as she paced up and down, had time for these reflections upon her friend’s unfortunate foible. And yet his not having been with Roma that day, or rather the suspicion

that he was so, having been proved to be unfounded, occupied her still more.

She was inclined to be angry with herself for having doubted him, even for an instant. She passed on to Roma, poor Roma !

Be it observed that Roma had never said she loved Hervie Ashill, nor said indeed anything of him more than that he was there.

Avice's reverting mentally to him, therefore, when she heard of a lady or gentleman in the road before her that day was instinctive, or rather simply deduced from the known fact of his having been at Dover just about that time.

Avice was waiting for Bridget ; she was going on by the night train, not to lose time, finding it impossible to sit still, and she had sent Bridget out to inquire the hour at which she must start.

She was, therefore, not wasting her time while reflecting upon poor dear Roma's troubles. She saw very little prospect of happiness for her, very little, indeed, unless she could induce her to look upon life as it is, and seek strength

to bear her burden in it, not complainingly, but resignedly.

Whilst occupied in these reflections, she heard suddenly a sound as of contention, angry words on one side, low murmurings on the other. It was the hostess's voice, she thought, and in very voluble English she was abusing a wretched creature, who murmured out :

“ Mais, Madame, je l'ai perdue—je l'ai perdue ! cette pauvre bourse : et le peu qu'elle contenait je vous dois—dites-vous. Prêtez-moi assez pour rejoindre mon amie, Madame Petrin, et je vous paierai à mon retour après-demain.”

Perhaps it was not extraordinary that the hostess objected. But her next proposal was a little startling ; she desired the woman to leave her child as a pledge of her return. In vain the poor creature pleaded, that it was entirely for the child's sake, that she might place it with a friend for its health that the whole journey was undertaken, she said that she was come from Dover on purpose, and that she herself suffered from English air, but that above all her child did, so that she could not leave her behind, now

that she was on the way to see her safely lodged.

Avice blushed for her hard-hearted country-woman, as she heard her reject every other pledge the poor creature could give, and withstand her sobs and entreaties. She stood so as to be seen by the disputants in the *basse-cour*, which was close to the garden, and she called to the hostess, paid her for the coffee she had enjoyed, and then inquired into the story of the weeping Frenchwoman, whose features, red and swollen as they were, she seemed to recognise.

In vain did she urge the merits of forbearance and charity, offer to be herself security for the poor woman, and suggest that the child, if kept, must be fed. This last argument alone had some weight with this greedy soul. Avice, seeing that it had some influence, left it to work, and went forward to console the poor woman, and to slip into her hand the sum required to satisfy her tyrant's demands. She saw before her—Félicité, the pretty foreigner who had been Roma's maid, and had left her to be married some years before, and by her side was

a lovely child of some three years ; and though without the brilliancy of eye and cheek that is usual at that enchanting age, and though the large brown eyes fringed with black, and the sweet rosy lips were just now very sad, because “Maman” was crying ; yet Avice could see that the little Félicité was very beautiful and engaging. Avice was not long in making the elder Félicité recollect her ; and her gratitude for the aid given was equalled only by her delight in finding an old friend, for as such she regarded any one who had known her beloved *petite demoiselle*.

Bridget now returned, and told Avice that the train was nearly ready. They proceeded together in the fly Avice had ordered, and *chemin faisant* Félicité rapidly and in picturesque language narrated her own history, and her reasons for this evening journey, saying that she was pressed for time, as her business was urgently in need of her presence in Last Lane, Dover. She pronounced the words with the long vowels, which the French language teaches its children to sound in English monosyllables, and which

always give a peculiar deliberation to the accent of even the most fluent and correct.

Fortunately, they were obliged to take places altogether in the only vacant carriage, and Avice's weary day was agreeably ended by bestowing her sympathy upon poor Félicité and her troubles, which had been those of most domestic servants who set up in "a little business."

The meeting with her friend, and the assurance of her little girl's being happy with her, seemed, however, enough to counterbalance every other interest for the moment ; and Avice, feelingly alive to the joys and sorrows of others, admired how the delicacy of friendship had survived amongst these experiences of life, which are often said to be fatal to all refined and cultivated feelings, she rejoiced in the perfume as it were that such sentiments can scatter over the coarsest, hardest lot, and most matter-of-fact realities.

The meeting took place at the station. A boy of some nine years drew Félicité aside, and asked her name, upon hearing it he said, "Follow me to my mother," and a little way outside,

under a tree, stood the expectant friend, and in the calm moonlight did poor Félicité run into her arms, and satisfy the longing of her soul to see her face once more.

Avice, on her part, found with surprise how much the scene had moved her ; she spent the next stage in thinking over their happiness, and in pondering how she should find her friend.

Brigid now began quite to knock up. Her head ached, and she was very weary ; and out of pity to her, Avice resolved to spend the night at Amiens. She had diligently inquired the whole way for news of Roma—her heart was too anxious to allow her to sleep ; but she was well aware that she must, so rising from her bed, she took some camphor-julep and returned to her letter-writing, which quickly induced “think-coming fancies” and the waving of the wings of slumber, upon which hint she again reposed, and slept.

To the credit of the French nation be it observed, in this place, that assistance, courtesy, and respect had met her at every step ; she felt as sure of a civil and attentive answer to every

enquiry, as in London, she would have been wherever she was known. What a wonderful value we Englishmen do set upon the wisdom of our eyes and ears ! The voice may be gentle, the appearance most distinguished ; yet if neither be familiar to our own white ears and our own grey eyes, it is wonderful how distrustfully they are heard and seen. In other lands it is not so.

And Avice found that a stranger and a foreigner might be sure of meeting, not only with substantial consideration, which I believe we are ready enough to bestow, but with a willing friendliness that o'er-leapt the “card and call” threshold of acquaintance whenever aid was needed.

And aid was needed now.

Roma had crossed to Calais—spent a night there in a private house—been to the post-office for letters—wished for Avice, but not dared to write again for her, and wandered on out of the town some little way, with her maid. She had discovered a pretty cottage near the sea, and had inquired about it “within.” The

owner was anxious to let it for a few weeks, and accordingly she got it upon reasonable terms, and here she had moved her little luggage and established herself.

No wonder, then, that Avice sought her in vain during several days—nay, during a whole week! At last—but we will come to that regularly.

CHAPTER XIII.

“Ages pass away.
Thrones fall, and nations disappear ; and worlds
Grow old and go to wreck : the soul alone
Endures, and what she chooseth for herself.
The arbiter of her own destiny
That only shall be permanent.”

SOUTHEY.

You must recollect that Avice had no certain information as to Roma's intentions—whether to stay at Calais or proceed.

You must remember that Lady Alfred knew nothing of Avice's bold resolve of following her.

But although this mutual ignorance of each other's movements was a great difficulty, it was

not insuperable ; and Avice having searched carefully during one week as much as she could, of the route from Calais to Paris, and having been able to discover no traces out of Calais, resolved in her perplexity to return thither, and to inquire at all events for her letters at the post-office, and discover there whether Roma's were claimed ; in a week she thought some must have arrived, for each of them.

As she passed once again, the place where she had seen Félicité's happy meeting with her friend, her eyes became dimmed with tears, and the thought occurred whether she were herself less blessed, because less in the way of duty than Félicité had been. Bridget, as if reading her thoughts exclaimed :

“ Poor thing ! what a short happiness after so long waiting for it ; see, my lady, here she comes back again.”

It was even so ; and brief as the happiness had been, it had been extended over five days longer than had been intended. Félicité had been too happy to leave her friend sooner.

Perceiving Avice, she came towards her to

inquire if her search had been successful. Of course Avice had not detailed to her the reasons of Lady Alfred's sudden journey, nor of her own visit to her; but she had told her of her difficulty, attributing it to having missed an expected letter of directions where to follow her; and Félicité eagerly offered, now that her own mission was accomplished, to assist Avice in the search.

She was truly a person of active benevolence, was Félicité, but gratitude to Avice, and a delight in lingering in her own land, the land that contained her little darling, had some share in detaining her thus, from her lucrative business, in Last Lane, and from poor M. Félicité, as Avice called him, or rather M. Monpays, as he had every right to be called.

At the Post Office, Avice learned that the letters addressed to Lady Alfred were always called for. Avice was too late for that day, and the messenger was gone.

She resolved to call the next day, and in the meantime she received several letters, addressed to herself, and forwarded by Charamille, from

Richmond, by the servants of Roma, from Dover ; and she opened them with a beating heart.

Who does not open with a beating heart, the first budget of news from home in a foreign land. We seem to feel all the separation—all the distance—all the value of what we have left behind ; and the pangs that were half effaced, return with double force. But what then must be our feelings, when we have left home upon an uncounselled impulse ?

Avice's heart beat truly, as if it would leap from her bosom.

Charamille, her parents, Lord Alfred, had all written to her, some in England, and their letters had been forwarded. Charamille and Lord Alfred had written straight to Calais, and the latter's epistle was most characteristic of his impetuous frivolity. He had been exceedingly angry at the step that Roma had taken, he said :

“ Because it was so likely to compromise her in the eyes of the world ; and because he felt obliged to follow her directly, though his busi-

ness was still far from settled." Thus he began, but ere the conclusion his anger took another determination, and he declared : " He would not be so foolishly generous as Avice had been, following, at all hazards, such a leader as his silly Roma ; and indeed, Avice's being with her was enough—for some days at least."

Charamille's letter was truly affectionate : she wrote thus :—

" My dearest Avice,

" As usual, your friendship has proved itself devoted and generous, but you must not forget appearances also, especially as your parents are away from England, and you are thus left to act for yourself. Therefore, my Avice, I beseech you to return to me, if you do not immediately find Lady Alfred ; or, if your conscience tells you that you had better not remain with her. Keep Bridget as long as you like. I am so thankful that you acceded to the proposition of taking her, instead of a younger escort, though you did not contemplate going so far.

" I can well enter into your feelings upon find-

ing your friend gone, and the *deliberate impulse*—yes, Avice, I give you credit for that—that made you so quickly resolve upon following her, and so considerately warn me of your intentions. I have written to your mother, that she may not suppose me unacquainted with your movements.

“Do you remember our last drive together? I have met the same people again more than once, and have dined with them, for I am wondrous well, and very glad was I to do so, for I became acquainted with Mr. Kent by that means, and with his pretty little wife, who appears to me not quite equal to him. He would have been an ornament to the Sylverton House festivities. He appears to me very clever and very agreeable; but there is a depression about him, which appears to lie very deep. One perceives it, as he becomes better acquainted with one. At first sight, his manner is gay and lively, but in conversation, an under-tone is discovered, of deep—and, I think, sad—feeling. I wish you knew him.

“Now, my dear Avice, remember that there

is a warm welcome ready for you, not to mention, of course, the longing, yearning affection of your true and loving friend,

“CHARAMILLE.”

The true and loving may nevertheless wound,
and so it was in this instance—

“There’s many a shaft at random sent
Finds aim the little archer meant ;
And many a word at random spoken,
May soothe or pierce the heart’s that broken.”

With a deep and heavy sigh, Avice folded her letter, and opened the rest.

Her mother’s told her of their having ventured as far as Marseilles—detained there by her father’s indisposition—an attack of giddiness and nervous irritation. Avice trembled lest her mother should have to go through such an attendance upon her father, as she had once witnessed at Richmond, that fatal year! And her thoughts thus brought her back to Ethelred.

She opened another letter; it was from Agnes, and contained good news of Marion, of

whose safety they had by chance heard, on her passage to Canada. She gave an account of the Castel-Eurilia affairs and marriage, of which Avice had not yet heard all the particulars. She mentioned that she was to return to Lady Sylverton, who was ill, and anxious to have her, and that her mother was already on her way to pick up Dora and Jessie, and return home to Norton Street, feeling that the sooner it was done the better, painful as such return must be ; and that now was a good moment, as the marriage of Allan had excited her, not unpleasantly.

"The Macbracs," she said, "were about to visit several friends in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire, so that the house of Glenferns would soon be quite empty."

Avice turned to seek occupation in looking for a house, or rather lodging, for the night, and having engaged rooms at the house of one of Félicité's old friends, went to refresh herself and that good creature with a walk, leaving Bridget to unpack.

Félicité was clever, and had tact. She could not see all that lay upon Avice's heart, but she

saw at least through her anxiety about Roma. She perceived that it was anxiety, and not mere vexation, at not finding her. And, knowing that the sea was a specific for a heavy heart, though she did not know why—she led her kind friend to the shore, and they paced along in silence; the low reddish cliffs, and scattered rocks at some distance from the town were before them, when Félicité observed how very languid poor Avice seemed to be, and proposing to her to sit down and rest, went a little away from her, and climbed up the rising ground.

Solitude was indeed, just now, dear to Avice.
On every side, anxiety, anxiety, anxiety !

If she found Roma, how would it be ?

If she went to her parents, how would she find them ?

If she returned to Richmond, how should she bear seeing Ethelred ? How confess to Charamille her former acquaintance with him, calmly and with composed indifference ?

Yet to return there seemed to be her lot.

She dared not venture to Marseilles alone, unless summoned ; already she might have

incurred anger or displeasure by her journey to Calais.

She thought her cup of perplexity was full !

Ah ! ah ! man ! when thou thinkest thy cup is full, and fixest thine eyes upon it, lest it run over, then the bitterest drop is yet to come !

Lift up thine eyes—fear not—look up to Heaven—look around upon Heaven's works ;—admire, adore the love and wisdom that is over all these works—lift up thine eyes, and give the cup of trembling into a hand that is ever over thee—fear not. It shall be changed into blessing and peace, into joy and thanksgiving, and thy cup shall be full indeed, and running over with exceeding consolation, and deep-abiding happiness.

Avice seldom fixed her eyes upon her cup of sorrow, or anxiety, without instantly raising her glance upwards, and perceiving a bright ray of sunshine resting upon that cup. But now, poor Avice, wearied and fatigued in mind and body, did indeed let her depression influence her step, her voice, her whole being. She sank down

upon the sand, and clasped her hands in mute agony.

Bending down her head upon her knees, and letting the tide come up unheeded.

Her life—her sister Amy's life—what a contrast! But with that gentle creature's image came a gleam of thanksgiving!

Avice sat thus, till the water rippling in among the creeks in the shore, and receding with a musical whisper, touched her feet. The sensation recalled to her her childhood, when to be wetted with the sea-water was a delight. She thought of the brothers who had pushed her playfully into each fair foaming wave. She thought of their young life, too soon quenched in more glorious being—merged, not quenched—and she felt, that as a wave is to the ocean, so is a lifetime to eternity; it is beautiful, it is grand—or it is serene, and not remarkable—or it is small, and ripples cheerfully away. Its little duty done—itself obliterated—the wishes it brought to earth yielded—and its foaming crest exhaled, to form one in a lovelier company on high; to blush in the sun's coming, or

purple in his declining light, to give refreshment to the weary parched earth ; and perhaps to return as a purling stream back again to the ocean.

The sense of calm, that this train of thought awakened in her—the feeling of trust in the Power that rules the multiplicity of Nature, to good and happy usefulness, and that inexpressible repose that always follows after high communing with Nature, and those after communion with Nature's God, gave Avice a new and lofty courage to go forth and be full of humble serenity, and faithful enterprise.

The deep murmurs of the sea, seemed to have told to her, as they do ever to the thoughtful that “Our light affliction is but for a moment,” and that in the ceaseless cycle of years, and times, are bound up many thousand human hearts, each beating and burning with a thousand feelings, not one of which feelings was given, or is excited by mistake or cruelty ! Love is over all !

As Avice thought thus, she rose and walked ; her step was light and elastic, her eye bright,

and her brow serene—the very personification of that union of energy with peace, which is so rare, and so beautiful.

Félicité called to her, as she ran towards her, to come quickly onward, as the tide was advancing. Avice cast one long look of intense thanksgiving, over the deep voiced waves, and then to the purple sky, and turned to follow Félicité up the cliff. The latter was in considerable haste and dread, and she looked with astonishment upon Avice, whom she had left sinking with langour, and whom she now saw so actively and calmly, with light gliding step, pass up the rugged ascent, and scarcely seem to feel it. The excessive beauty of Avice's countenance, too, beamed upon her like a star.

She did not express her surprise at Avice's freedom from fear, till they were safely arrived upon the summit of the cliff, and then, when both together said, "Thank God we are safe!" and looked down upon the little ledge of sand remaining below. She felt that it was not ignorance of the danger that made Avice so calm. Pondering in silence upon this and other mys-

teries, Félicité accompanied Avice back by the road towards Calais.

As they passed a little low cottage, some indomitable feeling came over Avice, and she became so pale that Félicité ran in to ask leave for her to sit down a few minutes. The permission was quickly given, and Avice entered gladly, for she was really tired. But directly she saw the woman, she recognized Roma's maid, and inquired eagerly for Lady Alfred. She was told she was just gone out into the fields, and had forbidden her maid to follow her; but the latter said that she was on the point of doing so, for that Lady Alfred seemed far from well still, and had been in bed three days.

They had a long, long search. At last Félicité found her sitting down in a corner of a field, shivering and half hidden by the long tresses of the willows that hung like herself over the brook hopelessly.

She thought Félicité a stranger, and she was so altered that Félicité scarcely knew her, and hardly dared call her "Lady Alfred."

When she did so, the frightened start and

smothered shriek, the vain attempt to hide herself, added “confirmation strong” to Félicité’s misgivings. She was at a loss what to do. Avice was not within view. Roma’s hand burned with fever, and yet she refused to go in. At last Félicité asked her if she would like some iced water.

“ Yes, yes,” cried she feverishly; “ quickly quickly! No! but are you—where’s Avice? Let me go and look for her.”

“ No, Madame,” said Félicité, respectfully; “ if you come home you will have something to refresh you, and see Lady Avice, too.”

“ Home!—where?” asked she shuddering.

“ To Calais,” replied Félicité calmly, and Roma allowed herself to be led home; by degrees she recollect ed Félicité, and asked her much about her marriage; but her illness evidently increased, and it was with great difficulty that Félicité got her home, where she immediately put her to bed, and administered cooling *tisanes*.

Avice meantime was seeking them both. She became alarmed lest Roma should pur-

posely have strayed, and she sought her eagerly in every direction, and whilst so engaged some one addressed her, and made her look up.

"Are you looking for any one, my lady," he said.

She told him who was the object of the search.

"Ah! well," replied he; "I met two ladies, or one and a maid rather, at the entrance of the village; one was very beautiful, the other had been good looking."

He bowed and passed on. Avice thanked him, and as she did so, a proud flush mantled over his brow, and his eye met hers with a peculiar expression; but he said no more.

M. De Traité had known Avice by sight long. He had also long admired her; but though she had often found him agreeable, she had not thought of him as a lover by any means. He however had presumed to invite her to become Madame De Traité — future Comtesse, and had been refused.

Avice blamed herself for this; preoccupied and sad, she had not remarked his devotedness,

and she did bitterly lament her carelessness when she saw to what it had brought her.

He conceived against her a great hatred in consequence.

Like the Laird of Cockpen, he regarded a refusal of himself, as an outrage upon taste, feeling, and right reason.

It was some pleasure to him to have met Avice in her travels without being perceived by her, to observe upon her to and fro movements, and to feel that he had in his power something like a secret that she would not have him know.

Avice felt that he would willingly misinterpret her actions; but she hastened now to put by thoughts of herself, and to fly to Roma.

She reached the house and found Roma very unwell, but anxious to see her.

Folded in Avice's arms, she burst into tears, and sobbed like a child for some time.

At last she said, "I feel safer now. You will pray with me, and save me from the horrid, horrid temptation. Avice! oh, say 'you will'—but I know it—I know you will not hate me for

it. Oh, I have prayed and struggled, yes, a terrible struggle!"

"What was—Roma, darling?"

Roma blushed and was silent, but for choking sobs. Avice trembled; but she looked calmly into Roma's eyes, and said:

"Will you not tell me?"

"Nothing; I have nothing to tell," gasped Roma.

"Roma, if watching and prayers night and day can do you good, I will gladly spend days and nights thus. But you must tell me the truth, or how can I pray specially for your case? Be not afraid, dear Roma, tell me all the truth. Heaven knows you need not fear me."

"Well, then! but it is too difficult! Come closer, dear Avice, and do not look at me!"

Avice pressed her closely to her bosom, and looked down. Roma spoke hurriedly and nervously in a hoarse whisper:

"I told you he did not love me. I was in danger of not loving him, I believe. At least I began to recollect how others had once loved me. Oh, Avice, do not despise me! I came

here not to be reminded of it," said she half inaudibly.

"My own dear Roma," exclaimed Avice, "you are quite right to dread even the beginning of temptation; but do not fear, God will teach you to be true and loyal, since you so earnestly desire it. But you must return to Lord Alfred, dearest! The world will speak of your being apart."

"Yes," said Roma, bitterly; "the world has a thousand echoes for the lonely farewell of a woman's voice; and for the solitary 'click' of the house-door, as she quits it; while a man may be absent as often, and as long as he pleases, upon the most trifling pretexts, and no voice comments upon it—no echo resounds his departing footsteps. However, I did not intend to leave Lord Alfred, Avice, as you may well believe. But the temptation to which he himself, by leaving me there, exposed my love for him. I can speak of it to you, Avice," she continued, "for you will believe me, you will be very sure that I tell you all the truth; I do not love any one but him, to whom I have

given my hand and my troth ; but I do not feel it quite impossible, if he neglects me, that I may ere long discover that the past may return, that the love I knew I once inspired, may cling about my heart, and be compared with his—and even be preferred ! And it is this that I dread, Avice, my friend. It is this that has been haunting me, and driving me to flee away. Knowing as I did, and seeing as I did, how careless he was of my feelings. How he left me. How little he understood the danger my heart was in, from being so left. Oh, heavens, Avice ! what a destiny, if we cease to love each other ! ”

She wept convulsively. Her burning hands clasped, her eyes streaming with tears, her bosom bursting with sobs. Poor Roma !

Avice knew not what to say.

“ Has ? ” — she begun, but could not conclude.

“ No,” replied Roma, impetuously ; “ he has never had any but the coldest manner to me, since my marriage. Whenever I have seen him, he has been just friendly, but that was

all. No one can blame him; but seeing him so often, reminded me of all the pleasure it used to be to meet him, until I knew," she continued, her voice faltering, "that Alfred loved me, and thought that I loved him."

"And now," said Avice, gently, "you will pray for help, to forget all else but this, that Lord Alfred loves you with all his nature—and that you love him with all your loyalty. Will not you, dear Roma? and so shall you be at peace once more."

"Do you think," said Roma, hiding her face in her little hands, "that it is indeed so, Avice?"

"I think, dearest, that none has usurped his place; but that you are frightened at his seeming willing to leave it half unoccupied; do you know it is a great, though unpleasant, compliment to you that he does so?"

"I suppose it may be," said Roma, faintly smiling; "and you give me a hope of becoming true in heart, as well as in deed, and word, dear Avice?"

"I do, indeed," said Avice, very seriously.

"I know that your delicacy of conscience in this matter is the work of God. I know that He sees all desires, and knows how you deserve a pure and loyal affection, and that He will help you. The trial appointed you is for your strengthening, not for your falling: read it aright, and seek daily, as you ask for daily bread, for daily grace; and live more and more for Heaven in all things, and then this and every other too great concern for worldly matters, will become merged in a devout love of every duty, because it is a thank-offering and concession of love. And then, dearest, in little things; strive to please your husband; do not fear him; do not look coldly on him! He will never find himself so happy as at home, if you never reproach him for leaving it, and if you are not *afraid* of his finding it dull. You will not be dull to him, or to yourself, when you have the strong interest of doing all for the sake of One who loves you beyond imagining. And then, Roma, dearest, your child!—his child! Persevere, dear Roma, in prayer and cheerfulness, and you shall not fail!"

Roma's colour had deepened, as Avice, with unusual energy, but the greatest tenderness, poured forth her counsel—her loving counsel. Large tears rolled slowly down her cheeks, the fire of her eye was quenched, and shone out in a new and holier lustre, and her head bent forward, now rested upon Avice's shoulder.

"Thank you, dear Avice, oh, thank you!" she exclaimed; "you have indeed, done me good! My way now is clear before me, God give me help to walk in it to His glory! I will write to Alfred, to-morrow, and entreat him to come, or not, just as he likes it, or to let me return to Dover, if he wishes it. And I will not be provoked at his absences, nor at anything else," she added.

"Thou shalt hide them privily by thine own presence, from the provoking of all men; thou shalt keep them secretly in thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues," said Avice, solemnly and affectionately. "And now, Roma, you must rest, you will be quite exhausted."

Roma was indeed in a high fever, and for some hours suffered so much that Avice feared

for the hopes she had begun to cherish. She sent a written message to Bridget not to expect her home, as she was with Lady Alfred, and as if to put her into a high fever also, she sent a French boy, who could not by any means enlighten her, as to the place and manner of the discovery and the meeting.

CHAPTER XIV.

“Dolc’ è d’amore la prima
Inaspettata parola,
E tutta la mente si comprima,
Per ben tener quella piccola—
Ma pure più dolc’ è sentire
D’Amor che rinasce, il dire.”

M. S.

IN a few days Roma was better, but not until Lord Alfred, anxious and unhappy about her, full of remorse occasioned by her illness and his desertion, arrived did she really recover. Avice received him with “Oh! how glad Roma will be!” and took him to her room. They met most affectionately, and determined upon

an early commencement of their expedition together.

But Roma's improvement did not continue. She became very weak and totally unfit to amuse Lord Alfred, and she confessed great mortification upon finding that she could neither walk nor drive, nor ride with him.

"Is it not enough to provoke a saint?" she exclaimed one day to Avice, "just as Alfred is willing to be amused by me, I am laid up and unable to do anything; such a bore for him to have such a useless little thing."

"It is, indeed, enough to *try* a saint," said Avice caressingly; "but we know, dear Roma, that saints are not 'easily provoked,' but trust, that however little likely it may seem, that present circumstances are for their good—yet that it shall prove so."

"It seems very unlikely that mine can be," said Roma with a sigh; "but I will try to think so."

Avice was right, even more than she had imagined. The solitary walks and rides of Lord Alfred, his occasional conversations with

her, in which he often cross-questioned her with more acuteness and a more *suivie* intention than he had ever before manifested about anything, but amusement, upon Roma's flight and her illness, seemed to sober and ballast his mind.

Avice, of course, was puzzled often to explain Roma's almost morbid fears of herself, to a mind so little apt to refine and analyze—without making her seem guilty of a real indiscretion, and without naming Hervie Ashill; but she succeeded. It was not for her, but for Roma, to mention the former passion of Hervie to her husband, and to explain, if she dared, her fears of her dwelling upon this recollection; and Roma did not yet dare. Avice advised her to have no concealments from him; but Roma trembled lest she should make him hate Hervie Ashill. At last, one evening, Avice was in the next room arranging the sofa, to which Alfred was to carry Roma; she had been very silent all the day, it was now sunset, and the rays fell upon the head and figure of Avice, as in the little west drawing-room she bent over the

pillows. Alfred observed to Roma how pretty her hair looked.

“ Yes,” she replied, “ she is a good angel to me, and she looks like one, in that halo.”

“ Come, let me put you into it also,” said Alfred caressingly.

He stooped to lift her from her bed, where she lay dressed; she put her hand upon his neck and drew him close to her.

“ Alfred,” said she, “ I am not fit for a halo—I am not good or holy—do not be in a hurry; I am not fit yet for the destiny of an angel! Let me stay a little till that glory is gone, and let me tell you, Alfred, something that makes me feel, till you know it, unfit to be your little wife—your own Roma.”

“ What can make you unfit to be my wife,” said he, sadly, “ except my having neglected you, my pretty Roma ?”

He had turned pale and red when she spoke of entering the halo, and looked relieved at the turn the discourse had taken.

She, with her hand still upon his shoulder, rose up a little, and laid her head there too.

Then casting down her long black eyelashes, she said :

“ Alfred, would you hate any one who had loved me before you knew me ?”

He started and trembled, but answered :

“ No, Roma.”

His tone was a little altered, and Roma raised her large dark eyes to his.

“ No,” said she, “ I knew you would not— you would rather like to have been preferred above all, Alfred !”

The sound of the last word was inexpressibly musical and loving.

“ I do not know why you liked me,” she continued ; “ but I could not help its making me love you.”

He stooped and kissed her fondly at this simple confession.

“ Could I help that, Alfred ? or could I help any one else having loved me first ?”

“ No, Roma, darling.”

She saw her progress, and putting her other hand upon his arm she continued :

"But I had never been in love, Alfred, till then."

The quick blushes rushed all over her face and neck. He pressed her to his heart.

"And I married you, so happily, so gladly; I thought life would be so perfect—I forgot that I was not perfect."

He started again; but Roma answered him by a loving glance, and by the words,

"I forgot I might sometimes be dull or cross."

"Never! never!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Alfred, when you were not with me! And I began to find that happy as I was, really, I could feel discontented when I was alone. And I was afraid, Alfred, I did not love you half enough. I know I never seem to do so much as I ought, dear Alfred, because I am too variable in temper; but I do love you!"

She put the other hand higher up, so that both were round his neck, and he pressed her lovingly to his heart.

“ Just then, I saw the person who used to love me, and it came into my heart to be frightened, for fear he should love me still.”

Alfred loosened his hold.

“ No, Alfred, you must not let me go ; I am yours, and yours only—in heart and soul.”

There was no resisting the strong truthfulness, and the living love of that cry.

“ But, Alfred, I was silly, very silly ; and because you did not see the danger, it became more terrible to me. I felt that if you were with me, I should be quite safe ; but that my own silly thoughts would not perhaps be ruled perfectly, and so I came away. I would not deceive you, Alfred, and so I tell you everything. Mr. Ashill never for a moment reminded me of his love for me. He never spoke to me, but in few words and on every-day subjects, and he seemed to have quite forgotten it all. You know he had never declared himself, and I was not at all in love with him ; but he was thought to be so with me, before I knew you.”

“ You will not hate him, Alfred ? And you will not despise me ?” said she, looking up one

moment into his face pale as a snow-drop or lily, and then sinking down upon his shoulder again, all glowing as a summer rose.

"No, my Roma! my true and noble wife! no, my own loyal and loving Roma!"

Roma uttered a little cry of intense relief, and clung to him the closer, and the more lovingly.

"Oh, Alfred," said she, "now I am more than ever your very, very own till death! God bless you, dear Alfred, for your trust. I assure you it is not misplaced. Oh Alfred, Alfred, how happy we will be!"

A hue of such unearthly brightness, and a subsequent pallor of such ghostly transparency, overspread her lovely countenance, that Lord Alfred was quite alarmed. He called Avice, and she, bringing some eau-de-cologne, soon restored the delicate Roma to her usual self, and had discretion enough not to inquire into the cause of the attack.

That evening, after Roma had been removed to the long-waiting sofa, and while Avice and Alfred sat near her, she talked and laughed so pleasantly, that they almost forgot how earnestly

they had been warned to seek for her a mild climate for the winter, and not to delay doing so. The character of her beauty had changed; instead of the bright, sparkling Roma, her charm was now the excessive unearthliness of her appearance, the dreamy lustre of her large pensive eyes, and the delicacy of her cheek and figure. Avice was not happy about her health. True, there were reasons for her delicacy just at present, but she could not defend herself from misgivings about it, and when she retired to rest that night, she shed many tears in the midnight, and sat long gazing at the stars, till their kindly influence stole into her very soul, and changed “each smoky, earth-born sigh, to purest incense-wreaths.” Avice had often felt this soothing influence before, and once, when very young, had tried to express its refreshment in verse, but she had not succeeded very well. She now tried again, and though far from thinking her verses *poetry*, I will insert them as describing “*Mir Scheint*” better than I can paint them, her feelings about Lord Alfred and Roma—her

fears for them—and the consoling thoughts that came hovering round her.

I.

“ Oh, gentle stars, ye call me forth,
From earthborn woes and trivial things,
To gaze on ye with yearning love,
And chant the hymn your phalanx sings.

II.

“ When weary, weak, and sin-oppressed,
I sigh to think on days to come ;—
Ye tell me of my glorious rest,
And mind me of—a sinless home !

III.

“ When anxious for *their* peace secure,
Who ‘ hold the tendrils of my heart ; ’
Ye say, ‘ Oh, trust thy dear ones here,
Commit to God their earthly part.’ ”

IV.

“ No good shall fail to such as heed
His tender call on Him to lean ;
And they shall never comfort need
Whose cares on im reposed have been ! ”

V.

“ Oft have I gazed upon ye, stars !
While tears of anxious love had way ;
And oft your gentle beams have kissed
Each tear, in rainbow hope, away.

VI.

“ Oft have I sought the midnight air
To calm the fear, or care concealed ;—
And oft in mute, unspoken prayer,
The anguish of my soul revealed !

VII.

“ *He* read it there ! *He* winged from ye
Bright stars, a whisper of His love !
And fear, and love, and anguish slept
As babes—whose angel floats above !

VIII.

“ Ah, yes ! each feverish thought *may* sleep,
Calm'd by the thoughts your beauty brings ;
That *He*, my dear ones, loves to keep—
He, whom all nature's radiance sings.”

Avice now thought she had better return to Charamille, as Lord Alfred and Roma were almost ready to start for Paris.

A deeper love and confidence reigned between them, and Avice could trust to its continuance, because a much greater interest in all matters of serious and sacred import had shown itself in their conversation, and seemed to deepen Lord Alfred's character. Still Avice knew his mutability too well. However, while Roma was in need of care, it was probable he would be learning to live less upon impulse, for her sake. She was very anxious to take Félicité, and this ingenuous woman undertook to accompany her as far as Marseilles, directing her trade in Dover by letters to her husband, in the meantime. She could not bear the idea of again quitting her beloved mistress, till she saw her better.

Avice also much felt the necessity she was under of doing so, and both Roma and Lord Alfred parted from her with much reluctance.

However, she and the faithful old Bridget, took their passage once more together, and returned to England.

Avice performed one or two commissions in the Dover house (which was "up" that week) for Roma, and paid and dismissed the few ser-

vants left there, and then proceeded to Charamille's haven of repose.

She found her preparing to pay a visit, to which Avice was also invited.

Dora and Jessie were gone to their mother, and the other little scholars were lucky enough to find out that they were wanted also, some by one friend, some by another, and Charamille was at liberty and in health to pay her visit to Sir Colin and Lady Rysstay. Sir Colin Rysstay, Bart., was, notwithstanding, in fact, a fox-hunter in Wales, and nothing else in Oxfordshire. His property was very good, and his wife handsome, clever, and *douée de talents de société*. She delighted in collecting her old friends, and new lions, and young *protégés*, and antique specimens, in another manner, but quite as fervently as poor Lady Sylverton had ever done. She had been a fashionable person, and even now that her sun was declining, she was surrounded by several purple and rose clouds, the *prestiges* of a former renown, that gilded and adorned her waning lustre.

Charamille would have deferred her visit,

when she found Avice was anxious about her father ; for, in truth, poor Avice had no desires for visiting just now, but though she had written, it was not yet certain whether they might wait a week, or must go in two days, as at first intended.

Avice in the meantime received an answer to her anti-penultimate letter, containing a better account of Lord Keffsdale, and saying that in a very few days they meant to be afloat again, and to visit several places of interest, so that her mind was calm upon that subject, at least.

In a story, generally, one person's life is made to stand out so prominently, that all other events and personages are only lights, shades, and red curtains, for effect. But is this real life ? Do not our destinies lie like skeins of many coloured silks ? Each crossing each perpetually—can any one aver that his one fate alone, occupies his thoughts, and makes his weal or woe ?

No, thank God ! we not only *must* not, but cannot live, without hoping and fearing for others. Sympathy is the branch of the tree that

heals the bitter waters. We do not care very much, perhaps, but we must, if we drink at all of the stream of life, taste its sweetness. Well is it with those who carry of its waters to the fainting and the weary—who drink them thankfully and dispense them liberally.

Avice's woes were numerous because she loved much—her consolations were many likewise. She led a diffusive life.

Not that I mean she was always away from home as now: far from it; I hope to shew you Avice at home ere I have done; but when sitting at the daily board, listening to, and joining in common conversation, walking by the way, or riding in the green lanes, she found time ever, ever to breathe a prayer, or to wing a thought, or to utter a heart-note of praise for the far-off destinies dear to her heart.

CHAPTER XV.

“ Quien viene ? Quien viene ?
Graciosamente hablando
Con sonrisa meliflua
Graciosamente hablando
Semejante a limpia agua.
Paz y bontad. Paz y bontad.”

M. S.

THE visit to Sir Colin and Lady Rysstay took place : it could not be deferred.

On the arrival of Charamille Seymour and Avice, they were received by Lady Rysstay alone ; Sir Colin was out with his guests. They arrived late, and were shown quickly to their rooms, having been prepared to meet a large party at dinner.

Before they went down stairs, Avice reminded Charamille of a promise she had made, to explain, if it was commented upon, the absence of Lady Alfred from her liege lord :—for such things are often misinterpreted.

On descending to the drawing-room, they found there only two very lovely children, playing with a tame squirrel. The little girl might be about six years old, and the boy, a very model of infant beauty, about two years younger. They stood together: her golden curls, and his bright brown ones, contrasting together prettily; each had the same deep blue eye, and bright fair skin. They were the children of a visitor in the house, they said, for they spoke readily, and gave their little right hand frankly to the new comers.

Avice quickly entered into conversation with them, and had nearly succeeded in hearing the whole history of ‘Spicy,’ as they called their pet, when the door opened, and a fair, tall girl, slender as a jessamine, of about ten years, entered,

“Cousin Zina! cousin Zina!” exclaimed the

boy, and leaping up to her, bent down her pretty head to his to give her a kiss, which she, like a startled fawn, received, and then colouring violently, bowed to Avice and Charamille, and said that Lady Rysstay and her mamma would be ready directly.

“And won’t my mamma?” asked little Eda. Zina smiled and replied,

“Yes, I suppose so; our two mammas are together, Eda.”

“Then I hope they are planning for you to stay, Zina,” said the little girl.

Thus much being said, Zina relapsed into great silence, and at length the whole party were enlivened by the entrance of some other children, also appearing “before dinner,” as children hate to do, and the little band moved off together into the conservatory, when Lady Rysstay and her visitors began to arrive from their excursions into the Arcadia of Cosmetics, and the gentlemen also from theirs. Spare them not—they love them as well as we do! Among them, and superior to most men there, appeared Hervie Ashill.

He immediately approached Avice, and was introduced by her to Charamille. He then proceeded to inquire after her parents, Roma, and Fanny, and appeared to be on the most intimate terms.

Avice was unfeignedly glad to see him, and to see him there. He inquired about Roma, and Avice could, with truth, speak of her health as very delicate, of her removal to a warmer climate, and of Lord Alfred's tenderness. She was thinking of Roma, and did not consider Hervie's feelings as she had lately done in mentioning Roma. He heard her very calmly, asking at last if she thought they would probably be very happy together. And she replied, that there seemed to be no earthly reason against it, and that both had learned, she thought, more of the real nature and sources of happiness, and were, therefore, in possession of every chance, or rather certainty, of happiness.

"Good angel!" said he, "God grant it may be so! This is your doing, Avice. God bless you!"

Avice coloured with her slow sweet blush, and the light came into her beautiful eyes.

“Hush!” said Avice, “rather thank heaven that it is not my doing, but His!”

Hervie begged her pardon, as he might have done had she been already more than mortal, and looked upon her with the deep serious attention that is—oh! how delightful—how far better than the prettiest or softest words!

She, to change the conversation, asked him who was to be there. He replied “the Macbraes, and a lady who has an estate in the neighbourhood”—but was interrupted by the voice of Lady Rysstay; she was herself enumerating the present and the absent.

“Four new arrivals!” said she, “all here present: Miss Seymour, Lady Avice, Lord Binglinnin, and Mr. Campbell. Six older inhabitants not all present—ah! Mr. Ashill, I see, as usual, is ready. Colonel and Mrs. Macbrae are not yet come down.” (Ashill left the room to call them.) “I expect a very lovely bride to appear; in fact, she arrived yesterday, but is not quite ready yet, I suppose. Then

there are, Mrs. Byngham, and Mr. Byngham, and her sister, Lady Clare, who has left her seclusion in my favour, and in order to see Mrs. Byngham ; both are very lovely, and so is my bride ; but hush ! here they are !" she said.

Mrs. Byngham's little boy and girl now rushed to her as she entered, which caused a little commotion. Zina quietly drew them off by a proposal to find some more candles in the passion-flowers, and the party advanced. Mrs. Byngham first, though her sister was a Countess, because she was less timid : nothing could well be more timid than the beautiful creature who glided in after her ; dressed in deep mourning, but not in weeds, for she had been some years a widow—young as she looked. But all eyes were turned, all the new arrivals' eyes at least, upon the bride and bridgroom who entered last—Ethelred Kent and his pretty May !

Ethelred did not see Avice immediately : he was much occupied with his pretty shy May, whose eyes blushed and sparkled, and danced—now bright, now tearful, as he led her round his friends and introduced her to the last

comers. Charamille she knew a little, having been introduced to her at Richmond as we know. He had not heard of her intended visit, and he was doubting whether to ask if her friend had returned to her yet, when he heard a low earnest voice say, "How do you do?" to some one near.

It was Avice speaking to the Byngahams, who had recognised her. She had not seen them since the sad night of poor Sir de Vere Sylverton's death, and this thought, at any other time, would have oppressed her. Now, she was too full of another subject; she felt that he had said enough to Charamille—that her turn must come, as she lifted up her eyes.

He had only just seen her and heard her voice. He did not seem to have strength to advance. Carrying her head a little more erect than usual, and with a decided and open friendliness in her eyes, she advanced, gave her hand to Ethelred, and said, "You must introduce me. No, you need not, I am sure, we seem to know each other, at least by sight," and she pressed the hand of May and gave her a quick warm

kiss ; " and now we are friends," said she smiling, and the lustre of that smile shone out like the light of the sun after a shower. May kept hold of her. " Yes," said she, " if you will let me. I am sure Ethelred will be glad of it," looking up at him caressingly. Ethelred was deadly pale, but she did not discover this, and for her peace happily, poor little loving May !

Dinner was announced, just as the Macbraes slipped in and two or three other gentlemen ; the numerous party, among whom Sir Colin buzzed like a jolly blue-bottle, amounted to sixteen, and Lady Rysstay's arrangement of them was not particularly well done. Charamille was not however ill-pleased with her place by Colonel Macbrae—nor did she mind Mrs. Byngham's going out before her. Avice was taken by Hervie Ashill ; but he could not answer a word to anything she said, for directly opposite sat the wondrous vision—the beautiful Lady Clare. Hervie had instantly recognized in her the " Eve in the garden," whom he had seen on his way to town in July. He could

not but listen to her sweet voice when she spoke, ~~and~~ admire the glancing of her wonderfully eloquent eye when she smiled, and the unearthly purity of her face, at once child-like in its radiant and expressive fairness (very fair grown-up faces are apt to be inexpressive or heavy), and perfect in its delicate aquiline outline and oval contour.

He longed to be introduced to her, but still more to be able to tell Avice all he thought of her. He was gratified to observe Avice's eyes rest upon her with a look of reverence, and then fill with tears. It is the sort of adoration we pay to an exquisite painting or strain of music; we cannot discuss it, but we drink in its beauty till we could weep for very admiration. Hervie knew well that it was thus, that great delight in anything always affected Avice, and he allowed himself just to murmur "beautiful," in answer to her thought. She turned her eyes upon him and said:

"No Venus could arrive at such perfection. She alone answers to one's idea of Eve when first created."

" My own thoughts !" said he, delighted ; " it is exactly that—no statue, no dream of man, could arrive at such embodiment of wonderful grace."

At this moment she turned her head, and the white shell-like ear was seen, resting upon the very beautiful and tiny head, and surrounded by the graceful waves of silky fair hair most simply dressed.

The line presented by her slender throat and low falling shoulder was exquisite. She was listening to Sir Colin's gay stories most amiably, and he, good man, thought he was amusing her. But Avice's heart was throbbing wildly, when, a minute afterwards, she saw Ethelred watching her and Hervie most narrowly. The evident intimacy existing between them annoyed him, yet it was not, could not, be jealousy.

She turned, however, to her other neighbour, for though she should have been Sir Colin's left hand neighbour, yet good fate had interposed to give the bride that place—and beside Avice, there was another, and a younger person, not that

Avice by any means was young enough to despise old men. Her chief delight in society was to be honoured by the notice of the wise and aged ; but Sir Colin was hardly that. Her neighbour was a clergyman, and he began to discourse to her upon divers subjects. At length he asked if she knew Mr. Anderton, who had just left Richmond ; and if she knew his successor there, who had been, he said, an early friend of his own, and a pupil of Mr. Anderton's ?

“ My father,” said he, “ was glad to do Anderton a good turn ; but he was, moreover, anxious to secure St. Bride's for my friend, who is his ward ; and since Anderton has been in his new living he looks much happier, and my friend is superlatively so at St. Bride's.”

“ Mr. Anderton is liked, is he, in his new living ?” said Avice, finding that she must say something ; but rather reluctant to mention any name connected with the strange scene in which he had assisted.

“ Very much, in the pulpit. In society, Mr. Kent could tell you better, for I am told he has

met him several times ; indeed it is rumoured that Mr. Anderton, when he first met him after he had arrived in London, and saw Mrs. Kent, was quite astonished and overwhelmed with confusion, and that he had been so severely “pumped” in consequence, as the expression is, that some one had extracted from him a few words about a former marriage, hardly a year before, and the lady still living ; but he mentioned no name, and was not to be persuaded to tell the story.”

Avice had fixed her eyes upon the other side of the table, where Colonel Macbrae happened to be relating an accident in the midst of severe action in the field of Burgos. Avice had just nerve enough left to fix her eyes upon the speaker, and try to pour out some water. Her hand shook, and she spilled the whole *carafe* upon her plate.

Colonel Macbrae was instantly called to order by his hostess for telling such dreadful stories ; and excusing himself volubly, he expressed great concern for having distressed Avice so cruelly.

Avice tried to smile, but fell back in her

chair ; several people rose to assist her ; Lady Rysstay, however, commanded all to be quiet, and she succeeded in inducing all to return to their seats except Charamille and Hervie Ashill, whom she graciously allowed to convey her into the next room ; more help was needed, for she was quite gone. Her neighbour started up, and so did Macbrae ; and he was allowed to go upon condition that he would "not frighten her with any more horrid stories."

There was another person at table whose colouring was all departed, and Howard, the neighbour of Avice, observing it, exclaimed :

" Why, Colonel Macbrae's story has hurt other nerves besides those of my fair Lady Avice. She could not attend to me because of the horrors assailing her ears, and indeed I see she was not singular."

Poor Ethelred was indeed ghastly, but he managed to recover himself pretty well ; and by the time Charamille sent back her coadjutors, to report that Avice was better, he was conversing as before.

Charamille had been occupied with listening

to Colonel Macbrae, or she would have observed that Avice's pallor and distress preceded her listening to his wild tales. As it was, no one had observed the fact but Lady Clare, and she had. This little incident rather checked the amusement of the dinner-table, and when Charamille was sent back by Avice, "to enjoy her dessert, like a good little girl," she found that poor Avice's illness, though no longer discussed, had evidently thrown a restraint upon all. She, however, made Macbrae talk, and his liveliness, when Hortensia was not within hearing, always amused Lady Rysstay immensely.

Ethelred was anxious to make Sir Colin talk, and not to let conversation flag at their end; so he put him upon "Irish elections," and Game Laws, and made him "show sport" a little while; but he was frightened when the frisky old hunter began to prance a little, and display his breeding and wit, "by alluding to an excellent run he had had once, some years before, of which the late Lord of a certain person," with a courteous bow to Lady

Clare (who, however, happily did not hear him), "had given a most flattering opinion!"

Ethelred saw he had gone far enough, and he began to ask his pretty May, if she had seen such and such things, in the drawing-room. Sir Colin began the history of the statuettes alluded to, but Lady Rysstay, who had reasons of her own for not wishing the price they had cost to be arrived at, looked down the table, and asked the fair bride and Lady Clare to come and examine them; and they all moved into the drawing-room. There they found Avice, very pale still, but sitting up, and much better, not in the least disposed to make any more fuss about her indisposition, which was formally inquired after by most of the ladies.

Other subjects then were started. Avice was greatly in fear lest the news she had heard from Mr. Howard should be again mentioned; but she need not have feared, for it was not even known at present to any of the dear creatures, who were busy inquiring about each other's dresses and darlings.

Avice took May's hand, and went with her

to a sofa, where she talked pleasantly with her for some little time, and so well amused the little, timid bride, that she passed through the time of expecting Ethelred's reappearance without thinking it long at all. Avice was satisfied that she was deeply in love now with Ethelred, hasty as their marriage had been, and on his part perhaps, much instigated by pique. There was a wonderful simplicity about May, quite apart from the rich originality of Roma; and though she was far from wanting mind, yet she was very very young, in all matters: for this cause also Avice felt much for her.

They were sitting together when Ethelred followed Hervie Ashill into the room. He looked delighted to see them thus, and not caring to attempt to come to them at once, went to speak to Lady Rysstay, who was known to like the attentions of her younger guests.

Mrs. Byngham came over to Avice, and renewed her acquaintance with her. She told her, too, a piece of news—namely, that her nephew, the young man who had been so smitten with Agnes, the fatal night of poor Sir de

Vere's death, was now in Wales, had been very insensible to all other charms, and was gone to the neighbourhood of Dale, quite by accident, of course. Avice was very glad, as it would comfort the mother so much ; and the elopement of poor Marion, and the strange marriage of Allan, were their next topics. Mrs. Byngham was no gossip, but she naturally reverted to the circumstances of those with whom she had last seen Avice. She stopped, seeing Avice's eyes fixed upon another group.

Lady Rysstay was presenting Hervie to Lady Clare, and her pretty fawn-like eyes were more lovely than ever, in her timid reception of him.

" How beautiful !" murmured Avice half aloud. Mrs. Byngham smiled.

" If you think so now, what would you have done if you had seen her before she suffered so much."

" Has she, then, suffered so very much ?"

Mrs. Byngham told her of several bitter trials that this beautiful creature had undergone.

Avice hesitated. " Perhaps," said she, " these very troubles may have given her something of

that spiritual beauty that is so unlike every other person. She is so very different from any one else—I mean in appearance."

"And in heart and mind, too, when you know her; but she is shy and reserved."

"Perhaps she dislikes new acquaintances?"

"Not yours," said Mrs. Byngham pleasantly.
"I will introduce you to her."

And a little while afterwards, when Hervie's turn was over, and his conversation ended, she did so. Then Avice and Lady Clare fell into discourse, and found they suited well.

There was, however, reverence enough for all Lady Clare had suffered in Alice, and natural timidity enough in Lady Clare, to make the said discourse halt a little at first. But directly the beaten track of conversation was quitted, Lady Clare shone out. Directly any sentiment was expressed to which her own mind responded, a bright smile flashed in her eyes, and she seemed to enjoy being appreciated and understood; but then, just as Avice was rejoicing in the progress made, Lady Clare would stop and colour, and resume her shy, startled

look, as if afraid of allowing so much progress to be made. She was excessively, but tantalizingly, beautiful at such moments.

Hervie Ashill joined in the conversation, and so did Mr. Howard, and they were well chosen, these members of a *partie carrée*—perhaps the most perfect number for lively converse, if they do not split into coteries—for there is variety enough, and not too much. Hervie was happier than Avice had seen him for a long, long time.

END OF VOL. I.

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